

THE
DUNGEON DEMOCRACY

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BY

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To the memory of Maurice Pertschuk,
hanged in Buchenwald Crematorium on
the 29th of March, 1945, who fought
more gallantly than any of us and died
more sadly.

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PREFACE

DURING the next year there will be published a whole library of highly documented and highly flavoured books on the Concentration Camps of Germany. In them will be found the most complete anthology of horror and brutality, the most complete guide to the way of human degradation yet proffered by any bookseller. There will be tortures and suffering in their most intimate detail, and a gallery of fiends' portraits to delight the eye of the most morbid sensation-hunter. There will be passion and hatred of a heat to scorch the most ardent and the most hardened souls, concealed though it may be beneath words of lofty righteousness; and for the more cynical there will be revived a human zoo in which they will delight to stroll on many an idle afternoon.

Many reasons would dissuade me from adding to this sea of words. I was only fifteen months in Buchenwald, never in another camp. I never saw it at its worst, although the last days were admitted by even the oldest inhabitants as being almost as bad as they had seen; and my experience of Nazi horror is as mother's milk compared with the vitriol through which passed, for example, the men of Auschwitz or the early prisoners of Dachau. Then I fear passion in books, because passion clouds the mind, so that the eyes see only the horrible surface of events and cannot judge their real place in human history. They see, as it were, only the first two dimensions, while the third and fourth, which alone give true perspective and relation, remain hidden behind the impenetrable red fog of emotional reaction.

Indeed, therein lies the whole reason for which I have ventured to contribute to this history. I suffered enough at the hands of the Nazi of the elemental sufferings of mankind, of brutality and hunger and cold and fatigue, to be able to understand and speak of them at first hand and to see the danger of such suffering on one's judgment. I saw with my own eyes far worse suffered by others. I have watched men die in filth and squalor and the stench of their own rotting flesh. Most were so far gone down the pit of

inhumanity that they were unable to know or feel more than tortured, dying animals, but some had still kept enough of their own souls and their own values to appreciate the pathos of their agony.

These things have filled me with loathing and pity. But vengeance is the right of God alone, and we must content ourselves with judgment and execution within our frail interpretation of the word justice. The evidence for conviction abounds, but for the sentence and execution we need balance, and above all we need clear sight to achieve the ultimate good of all evil experience and the ultimate end of every justiciary body, which is to avoid a recurrence of the evil. It is easy to make vengeance wear the clothes of punishment, and with that most of those who have suffered will be content, but no man who has seen into the depths of that human tragedy can be content without correction.

Those depths went far below the surface vice of Nazidom. The agitation of that surface revealed old and inflamed psychological sores which had no relation to any "ism" or "ist", mental cancers of great virility, which, unless they are treated in time, will produce results in no way less tragic than they did in this, their early period. One could see them clearly if one looked, for in Buchenwald was the amorphous raw material of human society and in particular of European society, and in the spasms and convulsions through which it went in its quest for form one could see more clearly than, perhaps, anywhere else the flaws and sicknesses in the component cells, which were, first, the individuals themselves and then, more broadly, their accidents of national sentiment and prejudice, of ideology and false education, of tradition. Every European country was represented there, with the exception of Portugal and Finland, and of them every class and category of man. From the British Empire Canada, South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, Malta, Cyprus and Guiana have had their witnesses to the play, a young pilot from the United States lost his life there. So intimately are we linked with this European Grand Guignol.

Many of my fellow-prisoners (they would have me call them comrades, but that was seldom a well-chosen word) will resent my shaking of the false foundation which they had laid for those who have now come to see justice done. They will cry treason for my criticism now even as they jibbed at my intrusion then. But justice is whole. The sickness cannot be cured if it is removed from the head alone. The whole body must be purged, the symptoms examined and a cure established, or in twenty years' time the world will have seen sights and suffered agonies yet worse than those which a small part of it has seen and suffered during the past twelve years. Brutes are of equal danger to humanity whether their brutishness springs from one psychological source or the other. We must try to discover those who are capable of becoming brutes, either when the barriers are let down or when their passions are roused to the point where they break the barriers; we must isolate them in some sort and study them and cure them, and those who are incurable must be neutralised or even destroyed. Let no one think that I am attacking him personally. I have tried as far as possible to leave personal things alone. My interest is to see the world cured of a pestilence which will eventually cause the destruction of the human race unless a swift cure is found. That pestilence is inhumanity, and this book is designed simply to give warning of its presence and of its activity and especially to guard against the fatal tendency to think that it is a direct offspring of Nazidom and will perish with its father. Nazidom was indeed infected with the germ as no other regime in history has been, but when Nazidom is dead the germ will still be there, strengthened and more virulent after its recent encouraging activity.

It is perhaps unfortunate that I have been unable to include as many exact dates, tabulated statistics, etc., as might have been desired in a work of this kind. My note-books became too compromising for me to risk carrying them on my person during the uncertain manœuvres of the last days and they disappeared in the pillage after the liberation of the camp from the block where I had left them.

PART I

BACKGROUND

THE Ettersberg is a small thickly-wooded hill, rising to some 2,400 feet above sea level, of which the summit lies eight miles by road north of the old town of Weimar, capital of Thuringen. Looking to the north over a wide shallow plain one can see lines of dull monotonous hills and beyond them the dark grey of the Hartz mountains, the home of the German secret industries. To the south-west stretches the high forest called the Thuringer Wald, and to the east the great plain of Saxony. In the old days you could see little of all this except from an occasional high clearing, and peaceful men like Goethe came there to be closeted quietly in the close company of trees and flowers. But when the Nazis came peace went. They chose the hill for the headquarters and depot of their crack Death's Head Division of the S.S. They built enormous cold concrete barracks for the troops and luxurious timbered villas for the officers. And they built a Concentration Camp.

The Concentration Camp was no new invention even in 1933, when the Germans built their first at Dachau and on the moors of Esterwegen, near Emden. For centuries the confinement of political enemies has been practised by the rulers of countries which have not reached the state of grace known to some as civilisation. The modern Concentration Camp, as used in Germany and Russia, is merely the rational development of the medieval dungeon, keeping in step with the Industrial Revolution. In the Middle Ages you left your enemies to rot in dank cellars; nowadays you keep him in the maximum of discomfort as before, but you extract from him his remaining statistical value in man-hours, thereby adding to your military power, the number of your prisoners, and so on *ad lib.* (theoretically).

K-L Buchenwald was started in 1935 with a few political prisoners from Esterwegen and Dachau, and some long-term

criminals. It was an acquisition for the Division, because plans were already prepared for turning it into a slave-camp of considerable productivity, and the S.S. who were responsible for its administration (for want of a better word) received their fair share of the proceeds—or some of them did. The Camp Commandant was given a quota of shares in the firms to which he supplied man-power and Sauckel, gauleiter of Thuringen, and controller of the great Gustloff arms works, reserved his share of slaves and later caused to be built a great new subsidiary factory just outside the camp. He was happy because he got his building and labour dirt cheap, and the S.S. were even happier because he paid them six marks per slave per day, which cost them nothing at all, unless indeed they paid real money for the mangelwurzels on which they fed them.

The camp started with a theoretical strength of 3,000, which was to be increased ultimately to 11,000. The original distribution of the prisoners was fairly even between politicals and criminals, and there was a small and impotent leavening of Witnesses of Jehovah, hard and unrelenting prophets of their faith who feared no man and took every hardship endured as evidence of their right. They were an object of mockery for some, but ignored it and kept their dignity of men when the others contemptuously bartered their own for supremacy in the tooth-and-claw struggle for survival which followed.

At first the criminals obtained the advantage in this struggle. The S.S. who appointed chiefs for the working parties and leaders within the camp found them more of a kind and more of a mind with themselves as being by calling instruments of injustice and brutality, and for the first period of the camp's life, during which the wood was cleared, the living-blocks built, the paths and roads levelled and laid, this assortment of murderers, rapers, robbers and swindlers, including some who had been certified criminally insane, enjoyed almost complete licence for their debased and unbalanced instincts. Their brutality was inflamed by fear, for, although the S.S. were glad to use them for the dirty

work for which they were so singularly well fitted, if their beating and cursing and murdering did not succeed in producing the required results, they were taken to task by their own masters and ended their miserable lives hanging from a tree or bleeding in the road from a laconic bullet in the neck.

We, the late-comers, walked on the streets (we called them streets though they were no more than levelled mud divisions) and on the roads of the camp, and perhaps few of us realised that every yard we trod was soaked with the blood of the unfortunates who came a few years earlier. We forgot that they were flogged down those roads at six o'clock every morning, driven to the end of endurance at their carrying and digging, and then flogged back again to stand for three, four or five hours or more on the wind-swept square on the north face of the hill until the whim of their masters saw fit to send them staggering to their soup, cold by now, and to their sacks of straw. They went out by Kommandos, or working parties, and sometimes the S.S. would give orders that one or the other Kommando was too large. Then some would not return. Once a Kommando left the main gate forty strong and never came back. The guards in charge reported that they had tried to run, and the bodies were counted in the wood so that the premium for each shot run-away could be paid and the regulation two days' special leave granted. It was so easy for the S.S. man who found he had not enough money to pay for cigarettes in the canteen one night to correct the position in the morning by shooting a prisoner in the back and thereby establishing clearly that he had been in the act of running away. And even if his tradition of Teuton "chivalry" suggested to him that perhaps there was a trace of unfairness about it, he could always reconcile his conscience with the act by remembering that anyway the man was an enemy of the Führer and as such would have to die sooner or later.

That square of mud and stone at the top of the camp saw more men die than most of the battlefields of history. It was called the Appelplatz, because its function was to hold

the morning and evening roll-call-parades, at which all the camp would assemble by blocks, ten deep, to be counted by the S.S. The call could be made and checked in fifteen minutes, but never was. Once it lasted thirty-six hours, and during the whole time every man must stand rigidly to attention. There was no wind which was broken by trees or warmed by sunlit fields before it reach the Platz. They all came, fresh and raw from their birth-place, from the snows of the far north, the alps or the Russian tundras, wet and cold from the Atlantic, and explored with their virgin icy fingers every cringing corner of each quivering body and then passed on warmed and delighted with the last treasured calories of this human jetsam, of which most had forgotten God or such spiritual values as they may have had, and had abandoned themselves, and in their turn been abandoned to the primitive care of keeping their hearts beating and the thin blood running in their veins.

Scientific history, too, was written on this Platz; for the S.S. used the prisoners as guinea-pigs in their search for the minimum ration on which men could live. They cut the food down and down and drove the working-parties harder and harder until one evening at the appel the climax was reached and in the flays of a mountain blizzard three hundred men, starved and exhausted from the dysentery of starvation and bad water, lay down silently in the snow and never rose again. Their bodies were stacked and burned, their names marked with an ironic cross and forgotten. The blizzard blew itself carelessly out, the S.S. went home to their women and wine, and the survivors crawled to their straw, some to die the death of exhaustion, others to carry on the bitter fight, with new steel in their hearts but driven another stage along the road back from humanity.

With time the physical aspect of the camp changed. New concrete living blocks were built and a great building to house the laundry, the showers, the clothing store and the other store where the clothes and private belongings of all incoming prisoners were kept "until their release". A hot-water system was built into this building, so that at least in

theory every prisoner could have a bath, a new pair of shoes and clothes could be disinfected in steam. In the S.S. mind, which, like all German minds, thinks under headings, thought of Hygiene and Medical Care. It cared nothing, but a patch of forest was cleared and a few wooden barracks put up to form a hospital, in which prisoners could die as miserably as before but in more formal surroundings, and which could usefully supplement the executory resources of their murderers.

Later one of the living blocks was converted to make a serological research station, the Typhus research station of the "Hygiene-Institute der Waffen S.S." Well-equipped laboratories were installed and a few mediocre scientists recruited from among the prisoners to make anti-typhus vaccine from the lungs of infected rabbits. Another concrete block was taken over by the Institute and used as an experimental station for the same research, in which prisoners were taken more or less at random from the camp, injected with typhus and observed in their reaction to various treatments. I only knew of two who had survived. Later the activities of the station were extended to include research in antidotes to phosphorus burns, where prisoners were burned with phosphorus (without anæsthetic, of course) and treated without result, and experiments on the hormone treatment of homosexuals, which later innovation was the brain-child of a captain who wanted to avoid the front.

There was also a Pathological section, by which prisoners were cut up when they died, and if they showed any interesting pathological condition the affected part of their anatomy was pickled and preserved in a glass case. It was all part of Kultur.

But if modernity lined the face of Buchenwald, pre-historic savagery remained the motif of its soul. The animating force of that soul was the Commandant, S.S.-Sturmbannführer Koch. He was a sadist who had been rewarded for faithful service in the name of brutality and Nazidom by the gift of a plaything for his twisted, foaming mind; and he played with an abandoned wantonness, a care-free

fiendishness which astounded even his masters and in the end brought about his downfall. No cruelty was foreign to him, no single cell of his brain had not at some time or other contributed to the planning of new refinements of anguish and death for the rats in his trap. He viewed his subject from every angle and sought variety in his methods. He liked the open crimson blood-bath, gloated over the slow white squeezing of life out of a single man, and rested content when he knew that at each moment of the night and day his scheme of death and torture was being faithfully executed by subordinates who perfectly understood his most delicate intentions.

Koch had married a harlot from some bar. She was a tall blonde of the classic German type, naturally gifted for her profession. He lined her with French vintages and decked her with gold and fur, but later found that her demands on his person were excessive and turned, as so many of his kind, to the delights of his own sex. She, treating his rejection with contempt and using the whole-hearted resourcefulness of her tribe, saw in the camp a stallion stud which could serve her lust, and made a habit of taking her morning walk inside the electric fence, where she would cast her eye around until it lighted upon a likely specimen. She would take his number, and he would receive an order to report to the Commandant's house in the evening. Such unfortunates had only one further destination . . . the crematorium.

Frau Koch was also the amateur of Tattooed skins. Inspections were held at the hospital, the more noteworthy chests and arms put to one side, and the owners killed and skinned. The skins were then submitted to her and she chose those which she liked and ordered them to be made up. The lampshade which Koch presented to her has earned them both places in the lowest category of bipeds.

In the autumn of 1943 Koch was arrested by the S.S. on a charge of embezzling Party funds. He had made the camp into a very paying proposition, but was perhaps loath to give his masters their share in the profits of his toy. He was

tried with his wife and both were sentenced to death and then reprieved. Their ultimate fate is at present unknown, but will sooner or later emerge from the muck of the S.S. investigation at present in the hands of the War Crimes Commission.

He was succeeded by S.S.-Sturmbannführer Pister, formerly a seaman from Hamburg, who had found in the Nazi Party a solution to the unemployment problem and who had impressed his new employers sufficiently with his zeal to be rewarded with the plum of Buchenwald. He was a blunt man, rough and without education, but had learned in his party career enough of the twists and turns of politics to realise that it was not enough to be a brute, but that a fox could serve both himself and his masters at the same time. Perhaps he already reckoned with the possibility of a Nazi defeat when he came to the camp; what is certain is that he not only increased the profits of the camp to the S.S., but at the same time won for himself the reputation among the prisoners of being one of the mildest Concentration Camp Commanders in history. He was not in fact mild; he was too much the German for that and too afraid of the heinous charge of clemency being brought against him. But he had a sailor's eye for the weather, and saw at once how, by contrast, he could use the crimes of Koch to his own advantage.

His arrival nearly coincided with the first big influxes of French prisoners, and it is possible that the presence of witnesses from a country which the Germans mutely acknowledged as being civilised compared with the savage lands of Poland, Russia and Czechoslovakia decided Pister to modify the old policy of outright brutality. Execution for the pettiest offences continued as before, but an order was issued to the effect that the S.S. supervisors were no longer to beat the prisoners. This order was by no means taken as serious by the troops, but many of them were tired and many of them had an eye on the end of the war, and in the end the result was a considerable lessening of the fear of being caught and flogged in the street for no reason at all.

Moreover, some of the worst of the N.C.O.s were sent to the front as a punishment for corruption and were replaced by others who were in many cases half-hearted Nazis and unwillingly in the S.S. Even the food improved for a short while, and by the spring of 1944 the behaviour of the S.S. seemed to have undergone a radical change. I say that in a general way, because there always remained a kernel of incurable brutes, and the old bestiality still glowed under the new polish and only waited for the opportunity to flare up again.

So in the last year of its existence a casual observer who came to the camp and looked generally at it without probing into corners, would have seen little or no beating, a large number of men doing no work, a much larger number working with a lethargy taught them by the Russians and summed up under the eternal Russian slogan "po malo", living blocks which were clean, kitchens with huge, horrifyingly modern soup-cookers and a hospital which would just pass muster at a very quick glance. If the crematorium happened to be smoking he would be told that people always die in a town of 30,000 inhabitants and that after all the most sanitary way of disposing of the bodies was to burn them. What crimes were not varnished with the word Hygiene?

But at no price must the visitor be allowed into the Little Camp, which was the quarantine camp. Nor must he be allowed to linger in the offices or the hospital. Block 46 was closed to him, and the Pathological Institute, and the crematorium. Above all he must not try to ask questions of the prisoners. For although Pister had covered many of the flagrancies of Koch, strewn sand on the blood and stayed the hand of his men from the whip, the seed of terror had been too deeply sown and too widely scattered, and was now bearing its deadly fruit in the very soil to salt and destroy which it had first been planted.

RULE BY PROXY

ONE might have entitled this chapter, which, with that which follows, describes the system of government in the state of Buchenwald, "Divide and Rule". It would indeed seem that the division between overprivileged and unprivileged prisoners was so marked as to call attention to this ancient method. But in fact the system which I shall try to describe fell short of the fineness of the Roman and bore more resemblance to that used by the Tartar conquerors of Russia in the thirteenth century, who, instead of maintaining a balance between the sections of the vanquished nation, chose one Prince, Yaroslav, and set him up over all the others, even adding to his lands the rich territory of Kiew. So the S.S., in such measure as they ordained prisoner-government within the camp, took apart one group of Germans, let them grow their hair, wear long shiny boots and eat comfortably well, and bade them make return by keeping the camp in working order.

The most striking characteristic of the S.S. was their crass stupidity. They were all men who had seen in Hitler a man who offered them the means of living by the only gift they had—brute force—and were one and all incapable of constructive thought. They were Germans, and had been sufficiently drilled in Prussian method to be able to design the tabular form of an administration, but on finding by experience that the nature of all human activity forbids mechanical rigidity, they lacked both the subtlety and the suppleness of mind to perceive their fault and correct it. For a time they flayed wildly in the morass of disorganisation but finally found that they were neither numerous nor adroit enough to control the activity of each individual prisoner and chose a class among the prisoners themselves, to which they extended their own licence of murder and theft, and which they appointed as holder of the deputy tyranny within the electric fence. They themselves continued with their old functions of guards, official executors, inspectors

and controllers, but took no more interest in the individual. They gave orders to their puppets, told them what work must be done, but left the care of execution in their hands and ceased to regard the other prisoners as anything but units of a total.

The key of the system was work. It was the logos around which revolved the whole cosmos of camp life. Every prisoner must work and certain work must be done, but that was the limit of the S.S. interest. Who worked where, who had the soft jobs and who must surrender his life to the quarry or the roads was no concern of theirs but of this fungus aristocracy of their creation. So they kept only an impersonal control. Each Kommando was in the charge of one or more S.S. N.C.O., whose sole duty was to get the work done. If the strength of the Kommando was fifty he wanted an account of fifty men, but he did not care which fifty, and passed the detail to a Kapo, or chief, who was responsible for the appearance and efficiency of the men. Inside the camp more S.S. kept up a prowl to catch prisoners who were not working and if they caught one he was as likely as not to be executed for sabotage. If not, he was sent to the quarry, generally with the comment that he need not return in the evening. Then he was murdered by one of several expedients, the most fancied of which was throwing his cap across the sentry-line and forcing him to fetch it. The sentries, laconically obeying the letter of their orders, shot him as he crossed the line.

The detail of the allotment of work was, then, the work of prisoners. An office, known as the Arbeitstatistik, kept a card of each prisoner and lists of each Kommando. As each new prisoner came out of quarantine he received a slip of paper ordering him to report to such-and-such a Kommando in the morning, and his work could only be changed through the medium of the office, which, if it approved the change, would send him a new slip. The only control of the dealings of this office was effected by the S.S. captain who sent it instructions to provide men for whatever work he had in mind, and its field extended even to the exterior working

camps dependent on Buchenwald. If a thousand men were needed for an aircraft factory in Halle or a steel plant in Bochum, it was the Arbeitstatistik which selected the men and gave orders to have them paraded. The S.S. merely transported them.

The interior administration of the camp, which occupied itself with cleanliness and that famous bugbear Discipline, was decentralised from the S.S. in the same way. Each living block was placed under a Block Chief, who in his turn delegated each wing of the block (the concrete blocks had four wings and the wooden blocks two) to two or three prisoners who held the title of Stubendienst, or Room Service, and who served little but wielded a rod of iron against those under their charge. The blocks were again subject to control by S.S., who made inspections for dirt and looked into the beds and cupboards for illicit goods. These inspections became less and less frequent in the last stages of the camp, and even the God of Cleanliness, to whom in the German mind all the virtues are subordinate, ceased to be worshipped with the customary zeal.

The whole of the prisoner administration was headed by three Camp Doyens, known in the vernacular as Lagerältesten and numbered 1, 2 and 3. Lagerälteste 1 was ultimately responsible to the S.S. for the discipline and smooth running of the whole camp.

It can be seen from this outline the amount of real power which eventually came into the hands of actual prisoners. These camp leaders had the unstinted and guaranteed backing of the S.S. guns; they had in their hands all the mechanism of death, whether by work, by hospital "treatment", by selection for the Experiment Block, or by simple denunciation on a capital charge, and in addition, and by no means the least important, they controlled the distribution of rations and tobacco. While the S.S. controlled the quantity of food that entered the camp, it was prisoners who portioned it out, and if a victim of their persecution was to go to the S.S. and complain that he had not received his soup or bread he would have been more likely to get twenty-five

strokes on his hinder portions than justice. In the big camp (that is to say the main part of it, where the working prisoners lived) I only heard of isolated cases of this happening. With very rare exceptions—and they were often justified—everyone got his daily ration, but where discrimination was possible and the rule was in the distribution of the surplus, of which there was always a considerable quantity. The Stubendienst, for example, had all the soup they wanted and often took more than they could eat themselves in order to give it to their friends. In addition, prisoners who formed part of the group in power could always go to the store and claim extra bread, sausage or margarine. It may be said that this was forgivable on the grounds that the surplus could only go to a very small percentage of the population, but in fact it was of such proportions that some hundreds could have received daily that little extra food which not only meant the physical difference between starvation and near-starvation, but also, if it was regular, held out the greatest moral support of all which was the certainty of being able to look forward to relief. A man who is really hungry and who can calculate that tomorrow or the day after or even next week he will be given an extra 200 grammes of bread or an extra litre of soup, lives on that hope and stifles the despair of helplessness. Fair-minded men, who thought of their fellow-prisoners as comrades in distress and considered position as a responsibility to them and not as a power to be wielded for their own whim, would have done this. Nothing was easier; but it was never done and those who have seen the pitiable state to which thousands of prisoners were reduced by starvation, who have seen men too weak to stand and yet who made a weight of skin and bone which could be carried in the crook of a woman's arm, can wonder at the inconscience of those others, who, well-fed themselves, denied the poor wrecks even that little of which they freely disposed.

That would have been but commonly humane, but, as was said in the previous chapter, humanity had been stifled

and trampled in the struggle for survival. All had known hunger and need, and all wanted to have too much. It was not enough to have enough for today and let the morrow take care of itself; one must have more than enough, so much that the possibility of poverty would disappear completely behind the horizon. Indeed, when class distinction grew sharper between the camp aristocracy (a word which had nothing to do with the Greek definition here as it often has nothing elsewhere) and the common herd, one of the signs by which an aristocrat could be known, and of which imitations and approximations were sought by the social climbers, was a solid surplus of this world's goods. It was smart to have more than one pair of trousers or boots or a spare outfit for Sunday, and a prisoner who always had a whole loaf of bread in his locker or smoked regularly would be treated with a marked deference by his poorer neighbours. Some of the greater stars in the constellation achieved remarkable wealth, and a great many lived far better in Buchenwald than they had ever lived outside in the hard world where one has to work for money.

Not all were actual leaders or holders of authority direct or indirect, for there were many resourceful independents who pursued the two lines of "organisation" and "abkochen". To organise was to obtain by any false means. It usually meant to steal goods which were S.S. property. Thus one could organise clothing, because it was supplied by the S.S., who pretended to a strict control of its issue; but one could also organise food, which was less excusable because its deficiency would not be made good. Abkochen is an untranslatable word. Its nearest English equivalent is "to scrounge", which, however, misses many of the finer shades of meaning. It really covers the obtaining of any article by wheedling, menacing, cajoling, chicanerying, or by plain bluff, and can be honest or dishonest, honourable or dishonourable according to its variety. There were few prisoners of any calibre who were not its advocates under one form or the other, and indeed their treatment of it was as good a reflection as any of their character.

Leaving aside these independent and quite insufficient incomes of organisation and abkocking, the real wealth of the camp, which, as I have said, was considerable, lay in the hand of the ruling class. They consisted of the Lagerältesten, the Block Chiefs, the chiefs of office and working parties, and their satellites, the foremen, the Stubendienst, and those others of their friends who either wished to remain obscure or who could not be fitted in to any official position and who were given soft jobs in the hospital or one of the stores or offices. During the first years these men (always Germans) were almost all drawn from two classes: the criminals, who wore green triangles on their clothes and the "anti-socials"—that is to say those who had been locked up for anti-social activity, such as brothel-keeping, fortune-telling, habitual drunkenness and the like, and who wore black triangles. Political prisoners wore red triangles, and for convenience's sake I shall generally refer to the different categories, as we always did in the camp, by their colour.

The Greens, then, were the first in power, thanks to their professional kinship with the S.S. Until 1942 they ruled without let or hindrance, and their rule was one of unbridled chicanery. They grew fat on the rations of their fellows, clothed themselves with the garments of those they murdered, and whiled away the long nights gambling and drinking, while their future victims lay on the straw and tried to recuperate enough strength and courage to carry them through the next day. Enormous sums of money changed hands, for, especially in the early days, prisoners would bring with them to the camp any money they had, and above all foreign currency and gold, and would smuggle it through the control to the disinfection in some remote corner of their anatomy. Once in the camp, however, it would be plundered off them by the gangster leaders, whether by murder or violent robbery or through the enormous Black Market which they ran in the essential commodities.

So they ran, these cold-eyed callous butchers, in a long

unchecked stream of blood and rapine. The S.S. encouraged them, for they saw in this reign of terror security for themselves and a simplification of their task of slave-driving, and only demanded of their creatures that they bow and scrape and click their heels before the sacred uniform. But the time came once more when they found that the whip is not really a substitute for wit.

With the erection of the factories—D.A.W. wood factory and the Gustloff arms works—they discovered that neither themselves nor their deputies were capable of producing results satisfactory either to the directors or to the Ministries which they served. Production on any scale at all was impossible without putting trained men in the important positions. Neither an office nor a machine tool can be run by a man whose total knowledge is confined to the extermination of others. Moreover, the industrials, who considered with some right that the camp existed only for their benefit, and who had strong government backing, began to issue complaints and warnings in no uncertain terms to the Commandant. The latter, reluctant to lose a field for his talents which could never be bettered, gave in and replaced some of the Greens by Reds who could do the job.

From the very start of the camp there had been a body of German Communists, most of whom had been in one form of detention or another since Hitler's accession and some for even longer, right back to 1921. They had been in perpetual hot water, and the common scalding had given them a sense of unity which was lacking in the other political groups, such as the Social Democrats, which were large enough to count. In spite of many somewhat similar ideas they had been bitter enemies of the Greens, and the years up to 1942 were the time of the sternest fight between the two factions. Both sought power for their own safety and their own prosperity, but their effort manifested itself in different ways, for where the criminal was a simple egoist and only helped his brothers when he saw a return, the Communists had become communal egoists. They had lost their native human selfishness as they had lost their other

human qualities, in the vast abstraction of an idea, and whatever one may think of the idea, it was strong enough to bind their rather simple minds together and give them the solidarity which in the end gave them victory.

Most of the Reds were industrial workers. Some were simple men, embittered by the difficulties and injustices which had made their lives poor and precarious since 1918, who had eagerly seized upon the hope offered by the promises of security and justice, and who for lack of strength in their own character had sought strength in numbers, had glorified their abstract Mass with capital letters and had decked it out with clichés which appealed to their frustration and rather resembled advertisements for patent pills. They were poor men, for they had thrown away their souls, but they were in their way sincere and even likeable.

There were others who had espoused Communism from pure spite. They were those who had never tried to work honestly and who saw in revolution a way to vengeance upon those whom they hated for jealousy of their ability to find their corner in the social room, and a way to get the whole room for themselves by forcing the others out. They were simply sitting on the other end of the see-saw to the S.S., and their end had gone down. Both were the malcontents and unemployable who could only see redemption in hatred and violence; one had backed the right horse and the other the wrong.

Finally, there was a considerable leavening of men who had perhaps risen from the same beginnings as the first, but who had had more supple minds, not thoughtful, but quicker to seize the shallow covering of doctrine which they were taught, and filled with an intellectual vanity which spurred them on to ape their heroes, to speak much and to set themselves up as leaders. Who their heroes were is uncertain. Certainly Karl Marx was not honoured with their imitation, nor even Lenin, although out of superstition and regard for the Russians they spoke of him in hushed and reverent tones. The bloodier figures of the French Revolu-

tion and the small-town fanatics of 1917 were more their models than the real prophets of the creed, who had been able to provide them only with a few disjointed slogans for patrimony. It was not even the fault of the prophets, who had at least left their text entire; but their heirs had chosen from those texts only the portions which would serve their own ideas and ends.

Furthermore, these minds, which, untrained and ill-equipped for thought, had already become warped in the effort to force reality into focus with idea, and having no roots in truth, were stung by hardship and by the loss of the landmarks which, though despised, had nevertheless held them in check in the outside world, into a frenzied stampede of activity, which left the scars of its passage on all with whom it met and which was marked by only two clear characteristics: the thirst for oppressive power and the readiness to crawl before their betters, real or imaginary. To the S.S., who found them useful, they smiled and clicked their heels, and to the Russians who openly despised them but whom they had learned in their schools to regard as spiritual masters, they behaved with an almost incredible sycophancy. But that, it should be remembered, only started when the Russian Armies showed that they were on their way west and might perhaps call to account those who had used their history in vain. For in the years of the Russian retreat there were Russians in Buchenwald, some of them prisoners of war, who had suffered as much from their fellow prisoners as they had from the Nazis. They never forgot that, as the closing chapter of the camp's days showed.

It was these men, then, who found the entry to power in their better training in industry, and they used the opening adroitly. They started by impressing the civilian staffs of the factories with their good-will. The latter, finding that work was done and the stream of invective from the head office dammed, out of gratitude filled the air with a chorus of praise for these prisoners who, even if they had different and foolish ideas on the Government of Germany, were at

least honest and painstaking workers. The chant was heard by the S.S., and did much to overcome their feeling that the worst of all men after the Jew was the Communist. They began to look at the Reds from a new angle, and seeing all too clearly that the office administration of the camp under the Greens left much to be desired and was continually breaking down, they chose a few of the more important posts and handed them over to the Reds. It was, perhaps a small beginning, but it was enough. The Communists were organised just for this opportunity and had chosen the men to fill these positions long before they were offered. They were their best men, of long standing in the party and of proved ability, above all as propagandists, and although some of the positions offered could have been very lucrative to any one of them, it stands to their credit that there was extraordinarily little bickering over the choice. That was eliminated by the rule that all profits must be divided among the whole of the party leadership. So the one who controlled the tobacco saw to it that the others smoked all they wanted before using his surplus for his own ends or friends.

I will insert here an example of the astuteness of these men. I shall not mention the subject's name, in fact I shall avoid names throughout because whatever we did together was in a sense our private business in a world apart, and it would seem to me indelicate to tax a man openly with his actions in the camp and prejudice his start after perhaps ten years of imprisonment. But I have chosen the best example, not only because he was perhaps the most successful propagandist, but because he was also the most sincere and the most open and straightforward in his dealings, and because he was one of the only two with whom I came to terms of even the flimsiest friendship. I shall call him Karl; he needs no surname.

In background Karl had been a pastrycook aboard one of the German transatlantic liners and had at some time or other stopped at the far end of the crossing and set up a pastry-shop in Brooklyn. He spent nearly ten years in the

States, where he became involved with the American Communists. He had been brought up to the party, but not hatefully, and his only intimate reaction in the early days was the scorn he felt for the passengers on the boat who used to visit the kitchen and who had lily-white hands that had never known work. At heart, I think, he was not a Communist at all, but he was loyal to a degree I never met among his fellows and never allowed himself to waver from the line which he had taken under oath. To illustrate his loyalty, he found among the French in Buchenwald a nobleman who was a banker by profession. No worse combination could have been found with which to win the friendship of a Communist, but Karl took a liking to the man, and not only did all in his power to prevent his persecution, but helped him on at least three occasions to find easier work. Each time he was opposed by his comrades, but each time argued against them that theirs was not a work of persecution as long as they were prisoners together, and that these altercations were genuine I know, because on one occasion I stumbled into the middle of one at a time when it could not possibly have been faked for my deception. That says much for the loyalty of Karl, but also shows clearly the way in which the vast majority of his brethren interpreted their divine right.

Karl was also a clever and experienced man, who had worked long for the party and who could be trusted. He was placed in the S.S. canteen, where he was in constant contact with the S.S., a contact he exploited to the fullest advantage. He was an admirable "organiser" at worst, and, being there in the country of his birth, he had contacts with many of the peasants and tradesmen of the district, and succeeded in building up a private stock of those luxuries which did not come on the standard lists of the canteen. Later he was promoted to Kapo of the prisoners' canteen, in ways a more meagre affair, but perhaps fuller of opportunities for corruption. He had his own kitchen in which he would bake cakes and tarts for the officers, and he was less under the direct supervision of the S.S. In fact, the

sergeant who was officially in charge of the canteen used to take his orders from Karl. Of course, Karl had the right personality for the job. He was bluff and downright, and made no bones about the fact that he was the enemy of the S.S. But he managed to persuade them that he was an open and honourable enemy, a trick which always wins with the quasi-chivalrous sentimentality of the German, and although outwardly he risked his head almost every time he opened his mouth, he knew his men too well to make a false step.

Karl did much to undermine the morale of the troops. As I said earlier, at heart he was not a Communist, but he was not able to think inwardly and so discover that he really was a man, and in Germany since 1919 there was never anyone to show him. He had had to choose between the Nazis, the Communists, and the fat, lifeless middle parties, and the Communists seemed to satisfy the highest part of his needs. I cannot blame him, but it is difficult for us, who are natural democrats, to understand the problems of a would-be democrat who has to live among men who know only tyranny and can imagine nothing better.

Karl, then, together with others who lacked his good points but shared his cleverness, slowly ingratiated themselves with the S.S. and drove their wedge into the criminal block. One by one the key positions fell to them, and from each one they pushed farther until finally, in 1942, the administration was officially turned over to them by the Commandant. From then on all the power and all the positions were in their absolute control. Only a few criminals were left as chiefs and foremen in some of the worst Kommandos, which were used by the S.S. as punishment Kommandos, such as the one which had to carry the camp sewage from the central cesspool to the garden in wooden boxes.

There was, however, one phase of this rise to power which I have mentioned briefly, but which is worth fuller development. I have explained how the Reds won the favour of the S.S., but not yet how they disposed of their enemies, for

it must be evident that in a camp where death was a commonplace they had little chance of holding their position against the counter-attack of a worsted foe who would be only too pleased to murder them all in their beds or anywhere else. And a dead autocrat is a most pathetic pauper.

The most inoffensive of the Greens were sent to outside working camps, generally with some sort of responsible position, for the Reds had ever one eye on the acquisition of supporters. But the dangerous ones were killed.

There was an S.S. doctor, chief of the hospital and a friend of Commandant Koch. His name was Hoven and his father had owned a well-known sanatorium at Freiburg, patronised mostly by English people. There had been an elder brother, who had studied medicine and should have taken over his father's work, while the younger, our Hoven, went to America to study farming. But when the elder brother was killed in an accident, the younger abandoned the land, returned to Germany and scraped through to an elementary medical degree which qualified him to continue his father's Kurhause. He was a small dark man with shifty eyes which explained his friendship for Koch, and he was a murderer of no ordinary talent. At first he used to murder only for his friend or at the dictation of his own whim. If he or Koch, or, for that matter, anyone else, decided that a prisoner was better out of this world, he had him summoned to the hospital. There he would take him on one side, talk to him about his health, pat him on the shoulder, and suddenly with a vicious dig, jab a hypodermic into him. What the hypodermic contained varied. Sometimes it was phenol, sometimes milk, but I think his favourite was just air, because of its reaction.

Later, however, the Reds saw in him a weapon. By ingratiation and a subtle bonhomie which seemed a favourite form of sycophancy with them, they won him over far enough to be able to foist victims on to his needle. These victims were the Green Pashas.

So in the end the situation was stabilised and the Reds, or rather this particular group of them, held undisputed

power with the rifles of the S.S. behind them. How did they use their power?

Remember first of all that they were fanatics. Their minds had for many years been poisoned with the idea that they and they alone were the élite, that they and they alone had any right of authority over their fellows, and remember that that idea was the only straw which saved them from falling into the abysmal despair of a total inferiority complex. Secondly, that idea had been instructed by the dogma of terror. Who is not with you is against you, and the simplest method of correcting him is to liquidate him. Had not the French achieved a miracle of democracy in this way in 1789, had not Russia changed its face from grey to gold with this simple cosmetic? And here an empire had been entrusted to them, a small empire, but one which nevertheless was capable of a much wider significance in the course of time. Were they to ignore the chance to help, perhaps even to lead, world revolution from these small beginnings? Were they to shirk the ploughing of their tract?

THE ANALYSIS OF ABUSE

THE answer was No! And plough they did, with great labour and assiduity, and using a sword for ploughshare. With keen perception for such things, they immediately saw, as the S.S. had seen earlier, that the Work Office was the keystone around which they could build their dungeon.

By this time there were a large number of camps belonging to Buchenwald, to be sent to which meant certain death for all but the strong. The chief prisoners in most of these camps were Greens, deposed from their metropolitan royalty and exiled to these minor principalities, and they, grateful to the usurpers for not having exterminated them entirely, and naturally inclined to sadism, were always willing to obey any surreptitious order which might accompany a new arrival in their camp. Some of these camps were famous, such as Dora, which later went into production of V-bombs

and became a separate camp, or S.3 at Ohrdruf, where the death rate was 2,500 a month and where 8,000 prisoners were massacred two days before the Americans overran it. Others were small and unknown, like Ploemnitz, where they did nothing but dig until they died, or the old salt-mines at Halberstadt, which poisoned hundreds, or the petrol factories at Merseburg and Zeitz, where Jews were sent two thousand at a time, worked till they could work no more, and then sent back to Buchenwald to be killed or die slowly of starvation, or to Auschwitz to be gassed.

It must not be thought that everyone who was sent to one of these camps was the victim of the Work Office. In point of fact, the S.S. sent down an order to send, say, a thousand men to a factory or camp, and the Office had to produce these men. But to a certain extent they had the power of selection. For example, if they knew a transport was to leave, and an undesirable was brought to their notice, they only had to write his name on the list and he was bound to go. Equally, someone who found himself scheduled to leave, if he could bring sufficient pressure to bear on the office, could have his name struck off. In principle there was always a form of S.S. medical control of every man due to leave, but in certain cases where it seemed obvious that a man could not be passed as fit for work, and if he was definitely on the office black list, the formality would be circumvented. I remember several cases, particularly among the French, of men being called for at three or four o'clock in the morning, given a suit of striped transport clothing and shipped off without further ado.

The French suffered particularly from this weapon. Perhaps the Germans feared them as being more intelligent than the foreigners with whom they had hitherto had to deal. They were always vigilant for any possible opposition to their mastery, and it is certain that the French, with their instinctive hatred of tyranny, showed their teeth from the beginning. The result was that nine out of every ten Frenchmen who arrived in Buchenwald left on transport, and mostly to the bad camps. Then, to cite an individual

example of the use to which this system was put, there was the case of Michelin, the French tyre manufacturer, who was sent to the camp by the Gestapo for resistance activities in which, among other things, he had ordered the destruction of a large stock of rubber in order to prevent it from falling into German hands. Michelin was a man of over sixty, and would have been automatically exempt from transport by the S.S. for that reason, but he was a capitalist and therefore condemned as an enemy of mankind. There were several attempts to send him away, but they were thwarted, until finally he was slipped into the confusion of a big departure for Ohrdruf. The medical formalities were by-passed, protests ignored. Indeed his executors worked almost too suddenly for his friends to have time to protest. He left. Three weeks later he died.

Transport, then, was the great terror and the chief of the weapons with which the rulers of the camp not only disposed of their enemies actual and potential, but held the rest of the camp in the subjugation of fear. Most of the prisoners who felt the flame of rebellion lick their hearts, quenched both it and their pride rather than risk being sent away. A friendly Luxemburger warned me from the beginning.

"Whatever you do, try everything to stay in the camp. Even to work in the quarry here is better than to leave."

Within three weeks I was put three times on the transport list for Dora, and it was only the courage and devotion of the most loyal friend a man ever had, Lieutenant Peter Kool, of the Royal Dutch Navy, which saved my life.

I put that in parenthesis partly as a public tribute to Peter and partly because the origin of the incident is interesting. As an Englishman I was automatically a capitalist, and therefore tentatively liable for attention, but perhaps I should have succeeded in passing the danger period at the beginning if my iniquity had not been stressed. There was a man in my convoy who apparently thought that because we spoke the same language we must be friends. I, how-

ever, had other ideas on the value of his company, and especially I mistrusted his history. So to avenge the slight, he went to the chief of our block and told him that I was one of the biggest holders of arms shares in England. I was told this by a Russian, who warned me of the consequences, and at first I was inclined to laugh, remembering the state of my finances when I left England (I was considerably on the minus side), but the smile left my face for good when I saw the peril in which I stood, for the story, ridiculous as it was, had been taken in great earnest, and I ranked high on the Black List.

As a variation on the transport theme, but still within the province of the Work Office, were the bad Kommandos in the camp itself. These were: the quarry, sewage carrying, ditch-digging and various railway Kommandos. They were more used for the less important prisoners for whom there was no room on transport, but who were nevertheless better kept more or less under the scourge. None were ever pleasant, even in summer, and in winter were almost unbearable. I did them all during the winter of 1944, so I can write of them with both feeling and accuracy. The sewage-carrying was really a punishment Kommando at the disposal of the S.S., but was used by the office as well. The big French convoy with which I arrived was for some reason singled out for special treatment, perhaps for their initial discouragement. We were supposed not to work during the period of quarantine, but at the end of a week orders came for a number of men to report for the sewage dump each day. We did it in turns, but there was already an unfortunate among us. He was a Procureur of the King of the Belgians, an ordinary legal office with a royal title, and of course this came to the notice of the German Communist representatives in our block. The result was that the wretched Procureur was sent out on this deadly fatigue on seven successive days. There was a perpetual blizzard raging at the time, and twelve unbroken hours of carrying filth, being beaten continually by Green foremen and S.S., were enough to daunt the strongest will. But he took seven days of it and

never flinched. I think that did him good in the end. Cowards are somehow always afraid to attack the strong, and they left him in relative peace for the rest of the time.

The threat of these bad Kommandos did not only implement the higher policy of the ruling class, but also the personal prejudice of their friends. Thus, if a prisoner had a quarrel with or showed unseemly familiarity to a Kapo or one of the other dignitaries, the latter would always be able to have him transferred to the quarry or elsewhere, where he could dwell upon the sin of presumption for as long as seemed necessary.

On the other hand, there were good Kommandos, which offered their members shelter from the weather, little work, and in some cases even a definite profit. Such were the Effektenkammer, the Hospital, the Tailors, Stubendienst, Pathology, or one of the offices, and I think it is worth while to describe shortly the two most typical, which were the Effektenkammer and the Hospital.

The Effektenkammer, translated as Chamber of Personal Effects, was responsible for taking off every new arrival in the camp all his possessions; clothes, money, valuables, papers. It formed the first stage in the induction process, and in theory, when a man left it, he had literally nothing at all on him. In case of oversight, there was a control in the next-room made by the staff of the Disinfection. This control was generally severe, as many prisoners tried to smuggle gold and currency in their mouths and elsewhere, but often they would leave the Effektenkammer with, say, a religious medallion on a cord round their neck. This was like a red rag to a bull with the controller, who was deeply versed in the atheistic teaching of his creed, and he would snatch the medallion, which was perhaps the most precious belonging of the victim and certainly did no one any harm, and open a long tirade on the inefficacy of the Deity in mocking pidgin-German.

"Ach! Die Mutter Gottes! Nichts mehr wert. Draussen Gott . . . oben. Hier nicht mehr Gott. Hier alles Kommunist!" And so on. It was rather a deceptive introduc-

tion to a regime where equality and "Kameradschaft" were supposed to be the guiding lights.

Apart from these little trophies which were collected by the Disinfection (moral and sanitary), the rest of the man's belongings were sorted out by the Effektenkammer and distributed as follows. One complete outfit of clothing was reserved against eventual release.* All tobacco, food, etc., was set aside for the Kapo of the Kammer, who distributed it among the Kommando and his political friends. Articles which took the eye of the Kapo or of anyone else in the Kommando were set aside for private disposal, and articles which did not seem of any use could be reclaimed by the owner at a later date. Only money was honestly dealt with, because it had no value in the camp whatsoever. It was put into the prisoner's account in the camp bank, from which he could draw 30 marks monthly. Interesting currency such as sterling or dollars were embezzled by the S.S. or the Effektenkammer according to who got there first, and shortly before the camp was overrun the S.S. in charge took away fourteen suitcases packed with gold articles taken in this process. Almost all the prisoners working in this Kommando were themselves Communists of one country or another, and thus had access to the spoils. The few who did not accept the political condition were not privileged and had the greatest difficulty in getting even an occasional cigarette from the truly vast stock which had been accumulated. In short, the Effektenkammer formed a part of the party revenue and treasury system.

One of the most interesting episodes in the history of the Effektenkammer occurred in the autumn of 1944, when it was the centre of a group of Austrian and South German Communists, who took it into their heads to set up a government which would be ready to take office in the event of the war coming to an abrupt end, as did not at the time seem unlikely. Not all the members were in the Kammer, for their head was the Kapo of the Pathology, an Austrian of

* The greater part of this clothing was liquidated in the last winter when there was a severe shortage.

considerable parts and one of the better elements in the camp. Unfortunately, this conspiracy met one night in the living quarters of the Kammer and rather indiscreetly made speeches of commemoration on the death of Thaelmann. They were denounced by a young Czech, who, incidentally, owed them nothing but thanks, and the Gestapo was able to make a number of arrests which caused no small sensation. Similar actions were carried out simultaneously at Dora and at Sachsenhausen. It was regrettable that at Buchenwald it should have been the best of the Communists who suffered from the most ignoble piece of treachery. The end of the story and the fate of those arrested were never heard definitely.

The Hospital was a rather different affair, its likeness to other institutions being found in its mismanagement and in the privilege rule. It was organised exactly like any other working Kommando in that there was S.S. supervision which took no account of the affairs between prisoners, and two Kapos who were its effective commanders. Both these Kapos were German Communists, and although at least one of them was personally quite a reasonable individual, the party idea led them astray and inflicted through them a "disciplinary" system which paralysed all notions of "equality before God and the doctor".

Each section, that is to say the bandaging section, the operation section, the place where you went if you were ill inside, and so on, was staffed by doctors or medical students, some of whom were brilliant and some very indifferent, but was under the immediate supervision of a Communist, who knew nothing whatsoever about medicine, but who had power to grant or refuse treatment. There was always the excuse of the shortage of medical stores, which was indeed severe, but even this should not have warranted the refusal to a doctor to treat a case which he judged necessary and certainly not the refusal to examine. Another excuse was that many prisoners, particularly the French, would find ailments in order to avoid working; but surely this was not the affair of other prisoners. Let them shirk if they could

get away with it. There was one particularly mischievous gentleman, a bricklayer by trade, in this field, and I often had words with him which would certainly have ended in blows had he been larger and less chicken-hearted. But he was the same as most of his fellows, put on a brave show at shouting, but when challenged by superior force preferred to go back into the shelter of communal strength.

I never had the misfortune to be an in-patient. The uninitiated dreamed of spending a quiet week or two in a clean bed with, believe it or not, a blue-and-white checked sheet; but except for the upper classes it was better to stay away and be ill in the block, even if it meant continuing work.

There were some thirty small wards, with varying numbers of beds, and each ward was in charge of a pfleger, or male nurse, who had under him one or two assistants. The pflegers were in complete control, and apart from one or two good men who had been slipped in unnoticed, they were as good a collection of callous brutes as any in the camp. They knew nothing about nursing and did not wish to learn. They made the sick make their own beds, even those with the highest temperatures, and wash their own plates after meals; they stole anything that was sent in for them and even took for themselves most of the special food, such as milk soup, that was sent for the serious cases. All this was accompanied by flagrant brutality, beating, kicking and shouting at any wretch who was too weak to move with the desired alacrity. And these were the plum jobs, granted to friends by the leaders of the camp.

To add to the scandal, there was always a shortage of beds, and men were sleeping in dirty blocks who could only hope to survive if they were properly nursed. But any "friend" who felt that he needed a week's rest could go to the Kapo and would be given a bed without hesitation. And he would not make his own. Or if he found difficulty over the food problem he could ask to be given milk soup or white bread, and would be given the portion that might have saved the life of some miserable nondescript who, after all, was dying of starvation within the same fence.

There are no words in which to condemn hardly enough the corruption of an instrument of salvation such as that hospital could have been, ill-equipped as it was. But I must mention three Communists who, unskilled labourers though they were, had studied and trained themselves in the care of their fellows, and who on no occasion would allow themselves to deviate from the just usages of medical etiquette. Their experience in emergency treatment was considerable, and they gave of it freely to all who sought it, irrespective of race or class or ideological fancy. It was men like these who taught me not to judge others by the accident of an "ism" with which dissatisfaction, poverty and ignorance had labelled them. They were fine people, and the only pity is that their very fineness disqualified them from having any influence on the judgment of that mysterious abstract which ruled them: the Party.

The sub-executive power in the camp lay in the hands of the Lagerschutz, or Camp Police. Until 1943 all the police work in the camp had been done by the S.S. themselves, but with the disciplinary stabilisation which followed the access to power of the Communists, they authorised the formation of a force composed entirely of prisoners. This Lagerschutz consisted originally only of German Communists, was later supplemented by a few Luxemburgers, and was finally increased to a strength of about 120 by the addition of prisoners of nearly all nationalities except British and Spanish, and almost all of whom were elected at the proposal of their respective Communist committees. They were almost without exception men of the roughest type, and little good can be said of them.

The job of the Lagerschutz was to keep two kinds of discipline: the one the discipline of the S.S. and the other that of the governing body. In many things the second included the first, but I will try to make clear the difference by citing two cases.

In the late autumn of 1944 a transport of Jews was returned from the synthetic petrol works at Zeitz as being no longer capable of working. Many died in Buchenwald, but

it was decided to send the remainder to Auschwitz for gassing. They were all in barracks in the Little Camp, and on the morning of their departure a squad of *Lagerschutz* was detailed to divide them into groups and march them to the station. Although nothing official had been given out about their destination, the wretches knew, as the rest of the camp knew, that it was beyond all doubt, and one would have expected that their fellow-prisoners would have taken the opportunity afforded to them by the S.S. to make at least their departure as easy as possible. The contrary was the case.

Imagine a thousand walking skeletons, out of their wits, driven by starvation, brutality and overwork beyond the memory of things human, beyond all reaction save only the recognition of the imminence of death, and so dazed by this that they could neither act of their own accord nor understand an order. Their despair was more vocal than dumb, and the morning was filled with a low moaning, interrupted from time to time by a scream of frenzy, as they set about gathering up their few filthy belongings.

Then the *Lagerschutz* came. They were led by their chief, a little cocky man, who swaggered like a sparrow sergeant and shouted like an angry frog and who loved no man but hated Englishmen the most. His men were armed with short rubber truncheons to make them feel brave among this crippled wreckage, and when they went in to the Little Camp we could hear the moaning rise as they sought to hasten the wandering Jews on to their last parade.

There were a few prisoners standing along the road to watch them go. They came out by groups of a hundred, columns of five, hardly able to walk and shuffling along with arms linked so that none should fall. There was a *Lagerschutz* at the head and tail of each group.

As they passed the first group of onlookers, one of them finished rolling a sort of cigarette made with a piece of newspaper and some dust scabbled out of his pocket, and he limped out of the ranks towards the side looking from one to the other and murmuring: "Bitte, feuer."

It was a Belgian Lagerschutz who was leading the group, who saw him, who came up behind him and struck him with his fist in the face so that he fell and lay moaning until some of his companions picked him up and took him into their rank.

Such men were the Lagerschutz: cowards aping their coward masters.

The second case I will cite is that of an Englishman, an officer who arrived at Buchenwald with me and whom I will here call Sidebottom, if he will excuse me.

Last winter Sidebottom was working as night clerk in the Effektenkammer. He did not belong to the Kommando and enjoyed none of its privileges, but it was better than picking stones. One evening he went to work as usual at about five in the evening, but was stopped at the door of the building by a Lagerschutz, who told him roughly that he could not go in. He explained quite quietly that he was working there, but was only sworn at, and finally received a blow in the face. Just at that moment the Kapo of the Lagerschutz came down the stairs and the other policeman complained to him that Sidebottom had argued with him and struck him. Sidebottom defended himself against the charge and told the Kapo to go and ask the Kapo of the Effektenkammer whether or not he was in fact working there. The latter, hearing the story and fearing complications for himself, denied him, and Sidebottom was roughly seized and marched off to the living block of the Lagerschutz, where he was locked in the wash-room for the night.

On the way up, the Kapo sang his hymn of hate.

"You had better be careful, you English. We have our eye on you and you needn't think you are going to get away with it. You walk about the camp as if you own it. Especially der dicke (my humble self), who looks at us all as if we were lumps of——" (How right!)

It soon became evident that owing to the bad light the policeman had arrested poor Sidebottom instead of me, for the Kapo appeared to hold nothing against him, but insisted that he had had instructions from a higher authority to give

me a lesson in respect for my betters. However, Sidebottom suffered. As was typical of him, as soon as he had been locked up, he began to whistle to himself, although such arrests were as often as not followed by a visit to the crematorium, but no sooner had he finished a bar than another Lagerschutz burst into the room, banged his face against the wall, swore and cursed against the English in general and me in particular and told him to stay quiet and standing for the night. Throughout the night similar visits were paid, always accompanied by the same sort of chant, and it was not until the next morning at six o'clock that he was told rather shamefacedly that he could go.

I may say that although there was little justice to be obtained after such events, we impressed them sufficiently with our displeasure to ensure that such an incident was never repeated. And we continued to look at them as if they were what they were.

Of course, everything was covered by more or less plausible excuses. If the Kapos seemed a bit rough, it was because work had to be done or the S.S. would interfere. If the Block Chiefs and Lagerschutz were apt to hit out, it was because unless strict discipline was maintained the S.S. would take it into their own hands. If the hospital chiefs were inhospitable, it was because there were neither place nor medicine for everyone. And so on. And there was an element of truth in each; enough at any rate to satisfy the excused. What they did not see was that if the ends they claimed were just and sensible, the means they employed were outside all the rules of common decency and comradeship. But that was incomprehensible to minds as depraved with hate and selfishness as theirs.

What could the judgment on them be? That they were guilty was beyond all doubt, and guilty of a most grave offence, in that they abused for their own ends position which they could have used in the service of their fellow-men; in that they brought death and distress to thousands when they could have saved hundreds; in that they forgot the sacred rule, that who sets himself up as an aristocrat

must first learn that noblesse oblige. But when I consider the sentence, I, too, begin to make excuses for them. Not the excuses they would wish for, for I tell myself that their minds were twisted by the frustration of such freedom as they had had, then by the incitement of irresponsible agitation, and finally by the treatment they had suffered and come to regard as normal. As a metaphorical magistrate, I would recommend them to a long course in a metaphorical approved school. Unfortunately such schools do not exist and I do not believe that there exist in Europe the foundations of good will and fair-mindedness on which to build them.

PART II

THE OTHER PEOPLES

IN the first section I have tried to describe the system of government and corruption in the camp. It was by no means a detailed description, and to my mind it did not need to be, since the object was to explain the origin and working of the laws by which we lived. Furthermore, I have hardly touched upon the non-German elements of the camp, which normally formed between 75 and 90 per cent of its strength, so I shall try in this section to take each of the important nationalities (I apologise in advance to those left out) and to reproduce the average of its thought and behaviour as I found it in such commerce as I had with them. I only ask the reader to bear in mind the conditions under which our friendships and enmities were formed before he uses my description for his own judgment. Some of the special factors had a constant value, some varied according to nationality and individual, and the abstraction or addition of them must be suitable if the final reckoning is to be accurate. By this I mean that, for example, the threat of transport and the fear of it was almost equal for everyone, whereas the nutritive value of the mangel-wurzel or the pangs of home-sickness were not the same for the Ukrainian peasant as for the Parisian shop-keeper.

Before I begin, however, I must enlarge the government picture a little.

Until the summer of 1943 there had been so few foreigners in Buchenwald that they really presented no disciplinary or administrative problem to the German prisoners in charge. There had always been, since 1939, a group of three hundred Czech political prisoners, who had been arrested on the outbreak of war as a preventive measure, but they were mostly men of some importance in their country and were treated as privileged prisoners, not working and kept apart in a block by themselves. In 1942 there came a few Russians,

but neither their number nor their character made of them a menace to the peace of the ruling class.

In 1943, however, came first some big convoys of Poles, then of Russians, including prisoners of war, and finally of French, and the camp leaders saw at once the necessity of selecting men from among them to whom they could delegate the work of political control. It must be remembered that the German Communists, in so far as they had any doctrine at all, were Trotskyists, and here in Buchenwald they saw that they could best maintain their ends by building the dogmatic camouflage of a deputy Komintern. So they selected those of the newcomers who had previous party experience and put it to them that it was henceforth their duty as Party members to obey the existing and duly elected Committee of Germans and to report on and suggest disciplinary measures for any of their fellow-countrymen who showed an inclination to kick against the pricks. In order not to appear too overbearing they ordered the creation of an International Committee, presided over by a Dutchman named Pieck, which would review all matters of an International character. This Committee had in fact considerable power, but it was always under the control of the supreme German committee, and its role was advisory rather than legislative. In effect, the German Communists had decentralised their rule when the mass to be ruled became unwieldy in just the same way as the S.S. had decentralised to them. They held their puppets by the same strings of advantage and privilege, but kept a far stricter control over them due to their common "ism".

THE RUSSIANS

I HAVE put the Russians first among the foreign nations which I must attempt to describe because they provide the most striking pattern of the tapestry of Buchenwald. Of all peoples they lent the most tone to the camp in general, as is shown simply by the fact that almost all the argot phrases

were Russian or corruptions of it. They were ubiquitous. It is true that there were two Russian blocks, but in every block there were numbers of them, and they made far more of a national unit in mixed blocks than did the others. If you thought of the French, for example, you thought implicitly of Block 26 or 31 or 10 or 14, which were French blocks; the Czechs meant Block 20 or 36, the Poles Block 37. But the Russians were just themselves and they were everywhere. They were clannish and independent; they had their own moral code and gave nothing for any other; and they behaved themselves as members of a proud nation among a crowd of humbugs and degenerates. They hated the Germans, despised the French, scorned their minor Slav brethren, and in return were fawned upon and secretly loathed by all and sundry except the Poles, who just frankly hated them.

Of course, all judgment on one's fellow-men is myopic unless it is derived from an initial presumption of equality, and the Russians suffered accordingly; for in no case could the average non-Russian separate himself from his basic feeling of inferiority and from the illusions of civilisation with which he attempted to bolster himself up. Vitality stings the lifeless to dislike, the success of others embitters our own failure, and the hesitant are allergic to self-confidence. And the Russians were self-confident, their armies were successful, and above all they were vital, with a youthfulness which knew no bounds of modesty or caution. So it was natural that the others shrank from them in disgust, but it in no way made them hateful.

On the other hand, they were full of qualities which, to my mind at least, raised them above any of their fellows. First of those qualities was kindness. They really behaved among themselves as brothers in distress, and selfishness was a notion as foreign to them as eating frogs. If ever one of them had something extra which he had organised or otherwise come by, he would invariably share it with as many of his compatriots as happened to be there, and they would always help each other to organise. I sometimes used to

comment on this quality to Frenchmen who claimed to be good Catholics, saying that the Russians showed much more in practice of the Christian spirit than the majority of the French, who, professing Christianity, practised egoism. Usually the reply would be something to the effect that there was honour among thieves or that this unselfishness was merely a mark of the lack of individuality which their regime had stamped upon them. The first accusation was irrelevant, because no matter if the property shared was stolen (which it usually was), that did not detract from the virtue of sharing it with friends. The second might have been true in any other context, because it is a fact that the average modern Soviet citizen has a very repressed individuality, but I am convinced that this particular suppression of ego sprang in reality from a fundamental and positively good quality. It is not interesting to go here into deep proofs of this; I merely leave to the reader the general impression made on me by a long observation of their relations with one another. Anyway, if that were a result of their system of government, I should say that it was a big point in its favour.

Before I indulge in any further generalisations, however, I must explain that the Russians in the camp were divided into three distinct classes. First there were the regular prisoners of war, recognised as such by the Germans, but treated as all other prisoners except that they lived in separate blocks, theoretically isolated, and that the senior officers did not work. They were about eight hundred in number, and included six brigade commanders (full colonels) and a large number of junior officers, of whom many preferred to pass as other ranks. They provided the best element in the camp. They were clean, honest, disciplined, cheerful, and thoroughly deserved the respect which was accorded them. They kept themselves very much to themselves and had little to do with the non-Russians, but towards myself and other Englishmen they never failed to show a spontaneous friendship, which was one of the warmest fires before which we could sit and which contrasted strangely

with the diplomatic frigidity which spoils my newspaper here outside. But that was the quality of Buchenwald. One found one's fellow-men stripped of the frills and furbelows of their outer conditions and saw their true worth and their true feelings as human beings rather than as citizens of this or that country or state.

The second class were the civilian prisoners who had been caught as partisans and by some chance escaped execution, or who were quite ordinary civilians, hostile to the Germans, who had been caught in 1941 and 1942 during the rapid German advances, or, lastly, who had been taken as prisoners of war, had escaped, and had been sent to Buchenwald as a punishment. To give an idea of the numbers of these, the Russian senior officer told me at the end that there were two thousand officers alone in the camp on the last day. On the whole, most of this class of prisoner were on a level with the regular P.O.W.s, but in some cases they seemed to have lost their Red Army discipline and let themselves slacken morally.

Finally, there were the "free workers", for the most part Ukrainians, who had volunteered to go to Germany to work, had stolen or committed some other crime in their town or working camp, and who had been thrown in disgust among the rest of us. They were recognisable at sight; shifty-eyed, cowardly, savage and ill-kempt, they begged, stole, murdered [and whined at the first hint of violence], and the other Russians would have nothing to do with them.

I was talking to a soldier one day during work. I had never met him before, and asked him: "Where are you from?"

"From Gorki," he replied, and added: "I am a Great Russian, not a Ukrainian."

He wanted to save me from misjudging him, knowing that I was new to the camp and realising the impression I must have had of the Ukrainians as they were represented; but among themselves there was no such territorial stigmatisation. In Czarist days the Ukrainian was looked on as an object for contempt by the Great Russians, who called

them "Kakhol", but present-day Russians do not acknowledge racial differences between Soviet citizens and behave perfectly naturally towards one another, although they still instinctively regard the Jews as being a little apart. I only once heard the word "Kakhol" used, and that was in joke, but to avoid confusion I shall talk in future of Ukrainians when I want to refer to the "free workers" and otherwise simply of Russians.*

I think the attitude of the Russians can best be summed up in a great love of their own country and an even greater pride in it, hatred of the Germans, and mistrust of all foreigners in general. For almost all of them Buchenwald was their first glimpse of what had boasted to be the civilised world, and they were not favourably impressed. The result was an unconscious increase of their pride in their own country and to some extent an assumption that the whole of the western world was infinitely inferior. France had always been the centre of western civilisation for them, at least in school, and France had given itself a hard knock in their esteem by its collapse in 1940. Russia, they told themselves, had suffered just as treacherous an attack one year later, but had survived and was driving the invader out again. And then the French in the camp gave a poor impression. They were slovenly, greedy, lazy and succumbed both physically and morally more readily than any other people. Germany the Russians had seen and found wanting; they hated the Germans and had judged them; and the small nations were too small on the map to warrant consideration. There remained only England and the United States, homes of the Capitalism which they had been taught to regard as the greatest of all evils.

* This is true only in general, for a Ukrainian or White Russian, when asked his nationality, would more often reply "Ukrainetz" or "Belorusski" than plain "Russki". An Uzbek or a Cherkass, on the other hand, would invariably say "Russki", without qualification. This difference springs perhaps from the fact that the White Russians and Ukrainians are historically separated from the Muscovite or Great Russians, and in the case of the Ukrainians even ethnologically. But they are separated on terms of more or less equality, which cannot really be said of the Tartar and Turki elements of the union.

We were the first Englishmen or Americans most of the Russians had seen, and they approached us with an odd mixture of friendliness, suspicion and curiosity. First they wanted to establish the fact that we were not degenerate, as they considered other westerners, and, satisfied on that point, they probed us on our capitalistic condition. Unlike the Germans, they never believed the comic story about my holdings in arms stock. Perhaps my youthfulness and general aspect of poverty made such wickedness improbable in me. Indeed, the majority of them never even troubled to ask me how many slaves I oppressed, but there were a few of the fanatical type who badgered me with questions about my means of livelihood, and who, I regret to say, went away rather dissatisfied, because to have dignity in Russia one must either have a manual "spetsialnost", have a father who had one, or be a member of the Communist Party. They discovered that by profession I was a soldier and, I think, suspected me of being something rather on the lines of the German Junkers, and they were further troubled by the fact that there was no reasonable (to them) explanation of how I acquired my spattering of Russian. So to the fanatics I was, at any rate in the beginning, an object of suspicion.

The less complicated ones, however, were very friendly and still more curious, and plied me with questions about salaries and how much bread a given weekly salary would buy. This sort of question was illuminating, more so, in fact, than the answers, because (and I hardly think I can be accused of snobbery in saying it) they were based almost entirely on guesswork. If I had been able to remember the prices I had paid I would certainly not have known the weights of the loaves. To them bread was life and everything else luxury, although in point of fact they eat a great deal of meat, and except in famine years they had enough of it and to spare. As for the famines, the government had not yet acquired control of the weather, but was taking all necessary steps, and it had taught them in the meanwhile to put up with what they got and with the privilege of working in the interest of something which they could not fully

comprehend, but which they were satisfied to think was the good of their fellow-citizens, a cause which pleased their essential kindness.

It seemed from their conversation that the average peasant thought little about the greatness of his country while he was still in it and accepted the propaganda about its and his achievements somewhat carelessly, but that when he was away from his home farm that propaganda came back from his subconscious memory and provided, as it were, a home from home in which he could comfort himself and keep his self-respect. That is pure conjecture, and as such should perhaps not have found voice here, but I cannot imagine him working as hard for something he could only imagine, however great, as, for example, the English or American equivalent, unless there was someone continually urging him on. The eternal exhortation "po malo, po malo"—"slowly, slowly"—seemed too much a part of the whole national make-up to be attributable to a quite recent spirit of sabotage. And this view is supported by the Oriental heedlessness of time which is fundamental to nearly every Russian. Time is the last factor with which they reckon in any calculation, and speed is only impressive to them because it represents mechanical power and not because of its time component as such. Those Russians who have been taught the necessity for bustle under the modern technical schools follow their teaching more because it is part of the same system as themselves and is therefore a virtuous necessity than because of any basic appreciation of time *per se*.

I have mentioned "po malo", which became an international comment to any movement whatsoever, and a very sensible one in view of our diet, and I can hardly omit another Russian word: the verb "kurit" to smoke. The simple verb is amplified in meaning, as are most Russian verbs, by the addition of a prefix, and the current forms were "dai po-kurit" (give the end of a cigarette), "dai za-kurit" (give a whole cigarette), and "dai pri-kurit" (give a light). All these forms were in constant use owing to the

extreme scarcity of tobacco among those who could not receive parcels from home. The first was used mostly by the Ukrainians, and it was impossible to smoke a cigarette without having one or more glue his eyes on the shortening paper, murmuring in your ear either boldly or brazenly according to how he summed up your social status: "Kamerad, dai po-kurit." This was very annoying. It was natural enough to give a bit of a cigarette to someone who had nothing to smoke, but somehow the lack of pride jarred and made the giving as ungracious as the asking. The second was used sometimes by the bolder Ukrainians with the French, who were generally the richest in tobacco and the least respected, and also, but in a natural way and not promiscuously, by the Russians themselves to such of their friends as they suspected of being temporarily rich. The third was used by both when their quest ended in success. Somehow "kurit" will always be for me a key-word of Russian vocabulary, much more important and characteristic than "kushat", to eat, which, Heaven knows, was important enough.

There was one great social evil among the Russians, which curiously enough does not trouble them in their own country, but which is widespread in the west. I mean homosexual prostitution, a malady which is so foreign to them that they call it "the Armenian disease". But large numbers of boys between the ages of eight and eighteen were sent to Buchenwald, mostly without parents or relations to look after them, and they fell an easy prey to the vice of the German privileged classes, most of whom were too loose to support continence and preferred the privacy of a perverted boy to the public favours of the thirteen miserable women of the camp brothel. There seemed to be a certain amount of social prestige attaching to the possession of a young Russian, though it was strictly limited to the German Communist clique, and they lavished their marks of affection on them quite publicly in the form of caresses and gifts from their superfluous wealth. Some kept more than one and allotted them various tasks, such as cooking, polishing their

boots, making the bed, and so forth, but in general one was enough. The children, of course, let themselves fall, not out of viciousness, but because they saw the way by which they could obtain enough to eat, little enough work and clothes, but their career was seldom long, and there was much bitterness and hatred among those who had been used and dismissed. There was much bitterness, too, among the older Russians at this soiling of their youth, and I think few of them will lightly pardon the profanity.

Clothes and ornaments were another of the Russians' loves, especially of the younger and poorer ones. Probably at home they had never had anything but working clothes, austerity or at best utility, and though their mothers and sisters probably pandered to their love of embroidery on their shirts, they had to do without such gorgeous things as riding-breeches and shiny top-boots. By organisation, clothes were not too hard to come by in camp, and since there were Russians in the clothing store, the Effektenkammer, and the tailors' shop, they succeeded, if they were reputable members of the colony, in coming quite near to satisfying their taste. Breeches were preferably dark blue, of heavy material, and cut with enormous wings, a good foot wide, which made a magnificent downward and outward swoop. Jackets had to be short, preferably waist-long only, and very close-fitting, and the favourite ornaments were gold teeth, and above all wrist-watches. By no means all of them went to these lengths of sartorial research, but every self-respecting Russian liked to look smart, and most of them had very good taste of their own kind.

The pleasing spontaneity of the ordinary Russian formed a strange contrast to the quite ridiculous suspicion and formality with which strangers were treated by anyone holding some sort of official position. For example, I knew and was very friendly with a number of the officers, but for quite a long time the lowliness of my rank prevented any of the senior officers from even acknowledging my existence. A squadron-leader who came later promoted himself to Colonel and was treated with courtesy and even friendliness

by them, but when it became necessary for him to disappear and I had to reassume my ambassadorship the rank of the Russian intermediaries lowered correspondingly. Moreover, although I could talk freely to them at large in the camp, inside their blocks I was always kept rather apart, as if they feared that I might bring the contamination of the west with me. But it was all done with great friendliness, and though on the face of it they were the poorest group in the camp, they were the soul of hospitality.

On one occasion, rather more important than usual, I had to deal with the senior colonel himself. He came in to me, very neatly dressed, and we saluted and shook hands with great correctness, standing stiffly to attention all the time. But when it was over I relaxed, brought out my cigarettes and offered him one. I have never seen eyebrows raised with such horror or such a spasm of offended dignity cross a face. I saw my error, but decided the only way out was to go straight ahead, so I said: "Please take one and let us sit down. I am sorry I have no vodka, but even tobacco clears the mind a little, and here between allies there is no need for too much protocol." I think that if my position had been less strong he would have left on his dignity, but as it was certain by then that the Americans and not the Russians would overrun the camp, he saw that he could best drop his reserve (which I don't think he really liked) and be friendly. After that we got on very well together.

Indeed I am inclined to think that this habit of ultra-formality is really a mechanism acquired to limit the danger of their natural spontaneous friendliness. They are afraid of foreigners and very suspicious of them, and they feel that if they are natural and friendly with us we will take advantage of them, and before they know where they are we will have them playing into our hands. So they forestall the risk by just never being friendly or free in any relationship which bears a trace of official responsibility. So, as long as it seemed that the Russians would continue their advance in Niederschlesien and arrive first in Buchenwald, they had to bear

in mind the consequences of their attitude towards us, but when the Americans were certain to arrive first they decided they could relax.

I had many friends among the Russians, but there was one especially whom I counted among my best. He was a young Lieutenant of Artillery from Voronezh, and was known as Bolshoi Sasha to distinguish him from the thousand and one other Sashas in Buchenwald. We liked each other from the outset; for I thought him the type of officer I should like to have in a unit with myself, while he found me interesting and, I think, slightly amusing. I was myself surprised by him in the beginning, because I had expected to find Red Army officers rather like what some of our own weak-minded and would-be familiar officers tried to be at the beginning of the war, before Norway and Dunkirk warned the General Staff to be hard on them. But Sasha had all the qualities which military tradition as opposed to social tradition have held up as the fundamental equipment of a good officer. He was firm, direct, healthy, and above all a gentleman in the true sense of the word.

We became friends, as I said, because we naturally liked each other, but the development of friendship, which comes from conversation, was more difficult for two reasons. The first was that my Russian, though it improved, was not an apt vehicle for the finer thought, and the second lay in the vast difference between our two educations. Sasha had gone in the normal way to primary and secondary school and then to the Military Academy, and in all of them had had nothing but a purely materialist education. Philosophic subjects had been almost entirely omitted from the curriculum, apart from a smattering of Marx, Lenin and Gorki, which served to give background to the political basic doctrine which he needed. My teachers, on the other hand, had always tried first to teach me to think, which they regarded as an essential preliminary to learning plain facts, insisting that I should learn the relative value of money before learning to count my change. So our minds were of a different temper, his rigid, knowing the simple facts which seemed

adequate for his simple profession, mine more supple, open to learn new shades and overtones, and always aware of the relativity of all observed facts. Historically, too, our mental attitudes were miles apart, because I, in common with most people of the Occident, was a product of the Greco-Christian tradition, which had barely touched even the Russia of Czarist days, apart from an insulated crust of literature; and I think it is important to remember this whenever one is dealing with people not of our cultural tradition, and to watch for the basic misunderstandings which might arise from it.

There was another curious aspect of Sasha's education. (The defects of my own are just as horrible and probably just as apparent, but this is about Sasha and not me.) One day we were reading a German newspaper, and his eye fell on the word "Hollywood".

"That's in England, isn't it," he asked me.

I confessed I raised my eyebrows a little.

"Do you mean to tell me you've never heard of Hollywood?" I said, as kindly as I could.

"Yes, I have," he replied. "It's a big Red Light district of London, isn't it?"

I had to laugh, because the description seemed so apt, but told him that Hollywood was (a) in America and (b) the biggest centre of the film industry in the world. He felt my amazement, but shrugged it off, saying:

"I wouldn't have known that because it is so unimportant. Besides, we have taken from your civilisation only what is good and we keep the rest out of Russia."

"But," I said, "I know even what you call your state film organisation, not to mention the centre of production. Knowledge can only do harm to people who have a wrong set of values and therefore misjudge it."

But he would not give in.

"Perhaps," he said. "I don't know. But I know the important things about the British Empire, such as where and what Gibraltar is and what India produces, and that is enough."

So I let the subject drop, wondering a little at such dictated ignorance.

Sasha and I often used to talk about relative conditions in our two countries. One day we were sitting pretending to work, and since there was no S.S. around I was sucking my pipe, which, as usual, was empty. I saw Sasha smiling and asked him why.

"You never read what Gorki said? 'If you see an Englishman without a pipe, he is no Englishman!'"

I laughed.

"I wonder how surprised you'd be if you went to England. What is your conventional idea of us?"

He thought for a moment, and then:

"A few people who have a lot of money and smoke pipes with gold rings round them, and millions and millions of people who live in black houses and can't afford to smoke."

"Haven't you ever read what Napoleon said about us: that we were a nation of shop-keepers. Or our own self-accusation that our middle class is our backbone? It's true we have a few people who are disgustingly rich and a few who are disgustingly poor, but the rich have slowly become poorer and the poor richer, and by far the greatest part is betwixt and between and stays there. It may sound very bourgeois to you, but it's weather-resisting."

He thought for a moment, then asked me what my picture of a Russian was.

"That's a difficult question now," I said, "because I know so many of you, but I think I used to see two types. One Komisars in black clothes, who spent their time ordering assassinations; the other, ordinary Russians who liked bright colours, alternately danced gay dances and sang sad songs and who loved horses."

He smiled.

"Yes," he said, "we ought to travel in each other's countries. We'd learn a lot. But between us it's been difficult."

"It's really all the fault of propaganda," I said. "Why, when everyone says they are trying to avoid war, do govern-

ments allow propaganda against each other to such an extent?"

His reply was masterly, and, for him of all people, quite unexpected.

"I suppose," he said, "that if a government feels or knows that it is not the best but still wants to stay in power, it has to tell its people that other kinds are worse or it would be thrown out."

Heaven preserve free speech! But then, Sasha knew I was his friend.

THE CZECHS

THE principal characteristic of the Czechs with us was the enormous parcels of food which they received from home. Since the end of 1942 the S.S. authorities had permitted food parcels to be received by all but a few rigorously suspect prisoners, such as ourselves, because they realised that it was the cheapest, if not the only, way of keeping up the "Leistung" or yield of the prisoners in spite of diminished rations. Those who profited most were the Czechs and the French, but in August, 1944, the latter stopped receiving anything but small Red Cross parcels, and in any case made a less homely impression than the Czechs because they tended rather to eat in splendid isolation and continuously than to make set meals. But the Bohemians (and the Moravians) behaved less like their name than anyone, and indeed the solemnity with which they cooked their myriad forms of dumpling became rather oppressive to those who had to chew a piece of dry bread and whose time for doing it depended only on their self-control. But it is always an easy step for the unlucky to turn jealousy of the luckier into hatred and abuse, and the poor Czechs came in for a good deal of sarcastic comment from their less well-catered-for brethren merely because they lived as nearly as possible to the custom they had acquired at home. They were called "bourgeois" (though at least half of them were peasants or

had their origins in the country) with all the nastiness that envy and ignorance can imply in the word. "Those something Czechs," one would hear, "always cooking!" And why not? Their families deprived themselves to send them the wherewithal, and their country in general had organised a great special Black Market at low prices to cater only for prisoners. So why should they be haughty with the others and disdain to avail themselves of this help to keep their self-respect and their health?

Block 20 was their chief stronghold. It was one of the wooden blocks, housing some 350 Czechs and was the only national block with not a single foreigner. Even the Block Chief was a Czech, and the backbone of its inmates was formed by the so-called privileged prisoners, arrested on September 1st, 1939, for preventive reasons, most of them active participants in one part or the other of Czech national life. Their "privileges" had originally consisted in not working, writing home more often, growing their hair where they wanted and wearing a red brassard, but later the ban on working and mixing with the rest of the camp was lifted, and most of them had good jobs. Among other things, they invented the two best Kommandos in the camp: the Ancestor-investigators, who made beautiful family trees and armorial bearings for the S.S. (relating them generally to a legendary hero or a family called Schicklgrüber), and the Interpreters, of whom I was to become a member. Neither worked very often or very hard, and their members spent their time in the block, cooking dumplings, painting, or studying—often English. They were seldom to be seen doing nothing; those who had no private art learned one, and one of them, who had been a street-sweeper, became a really excellent book-binder.

I will never forget the first time I met them. I had just left the filth of the Little Camp and was temporarily hidden in a party carrying telegraph-poles for the railway. It was a hard job because I was much taller than any of my fellow-workers, so I was given the thick end, the next biggest the thin end and four others were put in between. Obviously the

shoulders of those in the middle were a good foot below the pole and we had to carry it *à deux*. So I was tired. I was also ill with oedema and dressed for winter in a striped ersatz suiting which would not have been too warm for a prima donna in the Congo.

On this evening Henry Crooks, a compatriot who had risen more quickly from the ranks than I, introduced me to Bob Robetyn, a Czech International ice-hockey player who spoke English as well as ourselves. Bob invited us to go round to see some friends of his who might be able to help us, and took us to Block 12, a special block with central heating, of which two sections were occupied by the camp police and Fire Brigade, and the third, in some mysterious way, by some of the interpreters and a few other Czechs. It was cold that night and I was almost reluctant to go outside again, but I had my reward when we came in through the screened door to a bright, warm room with a smell of frying onions everywhere and saw an uncrowded group of neatly-dressed gentlemen with long hair, creased trousers, shiny shoes and—believe it or not, one whole beard. Two or three were painting, another cooking; at one table an earnest discussion was being held over what smelt like coffee; and the rest were reading. For me the idea of being able to read in comfort, with elbow room and silence and warmth, was almost holy, and there was a great peace in this room, whose occupants seemed not to be nagged constantly by empty stomachs and the dread of going out to the ditches in the morning. I felt very self-conscious.

A man sitting at the end of a table rose, and Bob introduced me. He had hair like Einstein's only shorter, a thin cultured face and rather mad eyes, and he spoke to me politely in fluent English, which he said he had learned there, and his voice, too, was cultured as if he would not know how to shout. Two or three others shook hands and spoke English in their several ways; then we were made to sit, given coffee and cigarettes. Till the curfew whistle blew we talked of Anglo-Czech relations, literature, music, subjects of which I knew little, but which I was glad to find

not extinct, as I had come to believe. I remember saying to Harry as we walked home through the wind:

"I can hardly believe that place exists. People talking quietly and about something other than food. It's not Buchenwald. If I could spend the rest of my life as they live, I wouldn't ask more."

It was true at the time.

Block 12 closed up two or three months later. The Germans grew tired of seeing these bourgeois living so well and turned them over to Block 20. By this time I was an interpreter, and having no office, we worked—or rather had one place of work—in the block. It was more crowded than Block 12, but the ways of the people were the same: living their imprisonment as peaceably and as profitably as possible. They divided themselves into groups of four or five, and each member gave the food he received from home to the group of whom one was appointed cook and camouflaged in some sinecure job to ensure that his real work was not disturbed.

The group which I knew best, and to which I owe a great debt of hospitality, was that headed by Dr. Holecck, editor of *Narodny Listy*, the Times of Prague. In it were also two of the secretaries of the Czech Communist Party and an old cobbler named Aloys, who later lost his teeth, but cooked without rancour in spite of it. They had all been arrested on September 1st, 1939, and they had learned to live together. It was an astonishing thing to me that whereas, in the rest of the camp, Communists of other nationalities had earned themselves only fear and hatred, here among the Czechs they were merely one of several political parties. Although the non-Communists regarded Communism as a disastrous system for their country and vice versa, there was no personal animosity about it, less, in fact, than nowadays between certain English politicians. And the Czech Communists, who, due to their seniority in the camp and the numbers of their national group, wielded considerable influence in the interior direction of the camp, used their power for the good of all their fellow-countrymen without

discrimination. So much so that the leader of the Interpreters, who in his time had been chief aide to the Czech Fascist leader, was supported by them because his Kommando helped so many Czechs, although his person was not overmuch loved. In my own case it was to a great extent due to the attitude adopted by these same men that the opposition of the Germans to my having an easy job was squashed. There were, of course, wild elements among them, but the leaders led, and never allowed the political ideas they held within Czechoslovakia to prejudice the mutual support which was so necessary to the healthy survival of all Czechs in the camp. Indeed, the Czech committee, composed of members of all parties, was always referred to by the Communist members before they took any decision *vis-à-vis* the other purely Communist committees, and I know that the wise counsel of Dr. Holecek, who was something of a Catholic-Liberal-Conservative, was the greatest single influence of any among them. It says much for the people as a whole that even those among them who could be supposed unreasonably bigoted and ambitious, judged by the standard set in other countries, showed such readiness to listen to and learn from more mature wisdom for its own sake, instead of condemning it outright on the ground that its source was infidel.

They were proud of their country almost to excess and hated all things German. To talk with them was to steep oneself in a hot bath of Czech history, of the hero kings who fought for their independence, their Empire which once was the greatest in Europe, the Husite wars, the Independence of Czech culture of the Austrian Empire, and the Czech Legion. They never tired of describing their country, the customs and costumes, the forests and old cities, and often the gentle precise voice of Dr. Holecek would make alive this land of green meadows and dark woods, of great industry and fine glassware, and, above all, of a people rejoicing in gaiety and festival and brightly coloured clothes of ceremony.

They were the only Slav people who found in the Russians

anything resembling a brother. The Russians themselves, I think, rather despised them for being a small country and for being so "bourgeois"—in other words, for living as decently as they could. But Russian pan-Slavism and worship of force can be often unreasonable. I remember a Czech who used to be a friend of Masaryk, but who found himself in opposition to Benes, and who had fought in the Czech Legion with the Czarist armies, saying:

"When a Czech meets a Russian he feels at first more at ease than when he meets an Englishman. Blood tells, even after so long. But when a Czech and a Russian discuss some subject seriously, they find that they are talking a different language. The Russians disdain us as brothers, unless perhaps as very young baby brothers, but we think we are better cultured and civilised than they. We'd like to be friends, but we don't want to be taught wrongly what we learned rightly: how to live. It's sad that Russian friendship, which should, for us at least, be platonic, is in fact an imposition, and we both regret and resent it."

And later:

"One of our problems, in fact our chief problem, is what you could call our geo-cultural schizophrenia. Some want to base our foreign policy entirely on a Russian alliance, others entirely on an Occidental one. But the truth is that, while most of us cannot morally afford a schism from the Occident, because that is the direction of our cultural artery, neither can we geographically afford to neglect our friendship with the Russians. Recent history has proved that England and America are too far away to protect us. But experience has also shown that reliance on Russia can only be obtained at the price of abandoning the western way of thought. Who will find the middle way?"

Inability to compromise is a slavonic failing, but the Czechs are certainly not to blame in this case. Nobody would like to compromise more than they, even if it seems that Turk has again met Turk.

Not all the Czechs in Buchenwald came under the influence of the veterans of Block 20. There was another Czech

block with fundamentally the same character, though it lacked the grey hairs of the first, and there were a few independents, some of whom seemed to have in some way broken loose from the quiet, if garrulous, stolidity of their fellows. There was, for example, a young coal-miner's son from the district of Moravskra Ostrava who worked as assistant medical orderly in the disinfection, where I worked as interpreter. He had been arrested when he was sixteen and had spent two years in Auschwitz and about a year in Buchenwald. His father had been leader of a Communist cell, and had been arrested with the whole of the family, of which this son was now the only survivor.

It is very difficult to determine the respective values of the different forces playing in a character like Sasi (that was the boy's name). Deep down he was obviously good-hearted, and though he loudly denied patriotism he was as much a patriot as any other. But he interpreted patriotism, as so many people do nowadays, as chauvinism, and loudly proclaimed: "I speak Russian, Czech and Polish. I have Russian, Czech and Polish friends. How could I then be only a Czech myself?" Notice he did not mention the Germans; and once in a confidential mood he told me he did not even like the German Communists. "There's not a real man among them," he said, "not one you can talk to as an equal."

I have already mentioned the controller at the Disinfection. He was also senior medical orderly, and as such was Sasi's boss. A German Communist of the rougher school, he had always allowed himself complete licence over the bodies of all who passed through, and was recklessly hasty with both fists and feet. The shadow of lawfulness which accompanies most Englishmen as a reflection of our history held him in check when I was present, but Sasi was continually complaining to me about him. One day this German was away and Sasi and I were passing a convoy of Jews from Auschwitz through. Because two S.S. sergeants were there we had to make at least a superficial search for valuables, and Sasi found a gold piece in one Jew's mouth. I wasn't looking, and the first I knew of it was that the man was

sprawling at my feet, holding the side of his jaw. I turned to Sasi and said in Russian, so that the S.S. should not understand:

"You shouldn't do that. Only the gentlemen behind us have taken the right to behave like that. We can't stop them, but we don't need to copy them."

Sasi laughed rather harshly:

"What do you expect me to do? Let him take his filthy gold into the camp and play Black Market?"

"No," I said, "confiscate it if you like, but there's no need to hit him, and if you don't attract attention you can throw it down the lavatory. As it is, the S.S. have got it."

But he wouldn't give in.

"You don't understand these people. You would if you'd been in Auschwitz. I was there two years, and we were treated there worse by them than anyone is here by the Germans. Now I have to see that they understand that they can't do it any more."

"But you don't need to beat people to keep them in order," I said. "You're not a German, so why behave like one. Sepp (the controller) has probably the same excuse as you, but you condemn him."

"But it's not the same—this."

It never is the same for others as for oneself where the relaxation of the rules of conduct is concerned. It is easy to see how Sasi had become infected with the führer-spirit. Three years of living under the Germans and under other prisoners encouraged by them to brutality had robbed him of the ability to consider not only the right end, but the right means, and had taken moral restraint from his baser instincts. But he retained the letter, if not the spirit, of his schooling. He was careful not to admit, even to himself, that he was getting his own back, which in fact was what he really was doing. Instead, that tortuous process of induction, so widely practised by those who wish to excuse their actions and camouflage their aims, showed him a way, which he would never recognise as an excuse, of finding a plausible reason for his inconsistency with his avowed principles.

Circumstances change, he would say, and with them methods. But his type go farther and change their principles to fit the circumstances. Their real danger is that they admit no principle as being absolute in itself, but only in so far as it is subordinate to a plan of advance. Add to that that brutality has scared and embittered them and you may then ask how it is possible to restore their balance. There are thousands in Šasi's case, but fortunately few of them are Czechs.

There was another curious feature of many Czechs, a trace, I think, of their long years under the Hapsburg heel. They are a very industrious people, and pure idleness lies heavy on them, but they seem often to work for work's sake. This is probably true of others, but not quite in the same way. There were many Czechs, skilled workers with machine-tools, who were put to work in the Gustloff factory, and whereas, for example, many Frenchmen did good work for fear of being found out or from a competitive feeling, they worked well because they were constitutionally incapable of working badly. I say it was the result of long subjection, and in fact it was, to the extent that they were unused to freedom and selection for whom they would and would not work. They had always, or nearly always, worked impersonally, irrespective of who benefited ultimately, and even now, when they knew that their most mortal enemies, the Nazis, would kill their friends, maybe their countrymen, with the weapons they forged, they were too aloof from interest in anything but the immediate detail of, say, a bearing to be fitted, for it to occur to them that it would be better to see that it fitted badly. On the other hand, it says much both for their industry and for their conscientiousness as artisans that they disliked to see a job badly done. Even the interpreters, who only had to fill in forms, spent laborious hours writing a beautiful script with fancy capitals, and I was frequently criticised for my illegible scrawl. They could not see my argument that it did not matter to me whether anyone could read my writing or not, because neither way would victory be appreciably accelerated, and when in doubt it was better

to err on the side of sabotage. Quite honestly, imperfect work offended them, no matter who suffered from the imperfection.

Finally, an observation about the Slovaks. There were very few with us, and they came late. From the Czechs I had always heard the assertion that the difference between the two races was negligible. Certainly the Slovaks had their own literature, but the language was very nearly identical with Czech, as were the general customs and traditions of the people, and they did not regard each other in any way as foreigners. But early in 1945 some Slovaks arrived in my block, and I was surprised at the difference in attitude. They were silent, surly, cowed like whipped curs. In the evenings they would sit at their table doing nothing and seemed even to lack the courage to go to bed. The only other people to whom they were comparable for their low morale was the Hungarians, their neighbours, and it would be interesting, were I an ethnologist, to study more closely the reasons for this similarity between two quite distinct though neighbouring races. Their behaviour in face of the Nazis seems also to have been similar, and Hitler must have had some keen psychologists as observers in order to have come to the decision, which proved correct, to split Czechoslovakia, treat the Czechs rough, but encourage the Slovaks to collaborate.

THE FRENCH

It is with reluctance that I approach this chapter. To record the bare facts of the history of France-in-Buchenwald would be a task distasteful to anyone who was even on nodding terms with French traditions, but to myself, who had known France intimately and loved her before the war and loved her and worked for her during it, it is almost painful. But to gild a faded lily is vain, to try to refresh it with cold water can be useful; and to say that the majority of the 28,000 Frenchmen who passed through Buchenwald were worthy ambassadors of a great country would be both useless and hypocritical. One cannot judge them by compari-

son with the others. Germany and German methods were more foreign to them, and where a rough peasant from Eastern Europe found little difficulty in accommodating himself to the new, only little rougher serfdom, the more sensitive, more highly civilised French found the shock of the sudden change almost too great to withstand. It was perhaps more than anything a sign of the moral wear and tear suffered by the French people through the last corrupt years of the decadent Third Republic and the humiliation of defeat and occupation, that few of them found the inner strength to stand up against the seemingly overwhelming forces of brutality and corruption which seemed to gather specially against them as the upholders of a "degenerate civilisation". Had they been willing to defend themselves, they would have found support among the ranks of those who could not be suspected of degeneracy, even if convicted of the greater sin of self-respect, and many lives and much pride might have been saved. But they were cowed by the enemy's show of force and had too little faith in themselves to make the necessary moral come-back to join us. Perhaps, too, they resented us. They were painfully aware of the depths to which they had fallen, publicly as well as really, and thought that to do anything but patronise us would be beneath their dignity. It was a pity. We had no wish to appear condescending, we only wanted to see a flicker of real spirit. But it never came, and we went our separate ways, ourselves to freedom, even in honourable death, and they to a life of bitter bickering or a death of misery, and in either case of shame before themselves and before others.

What right had Frenchmen so to behave, so to betray themselves and each other that uncouth savages hailing from countries still plunged in the Dark Ages, scorned them and said of them: "Franzus scheisel!" No historical glory, no claim to higher value in the civilised world, no self-hypnotism and argument "they are not fit to judge us" are of value if they do not prove themselves in the living of life.

I came to Buchenwald in a convoy of two thousand Frenchmen. We spent four days in wagons (40 hommes,

8 chevaux en long), 110 men in a wagon, with no water and two small holes for air, which were almost completely blocked by wire. From the start I understood a little of their trouble. There was no room for everyone to sit however we crowded, and it was immediately a question of every man for himself. In a few hours there was not room for those who were standing to put both feet on the ground. I myself stood up the first night to let another sit and had to remain standing for the rest of the journey. There was a perpetual hubbub of the more comfortable shouting sententious advice about comradeship which they had no intention of practising themselves. When our thirst and bursting lungs began to oppress us they forgot all consideration for each other. The fainting were allowed to faint by themselves. The Catholics jagged the nerves of the Communists by chanting loud prayers. The Communists stole some communion wine smuggled in by a priest. Later a man's life might have been saved by that little flagon of wine, but it had already quenched a coward's thirst. The only one of them who behaved with real decency was a mulatto from one of the Carribean islands, who, I remember, was later to take off his coat in the middle of a blizzard and stand shivering for two hours so that an Englishman should not die of pneumonia.

When we arrived, it was soon made plain to us that there was no appeal against the authority of the German Communist leaders, and while the lowest of one group slunk into the enemy's parlour and offered tribute to their new rulers, the others were content to wait until hostile backs were turned and then to protest with much gesticulation and in passionate tones against this "intolerable tyranny" of their fellow-prisoners. But it was all words. Their minds seemed to foment eternally, but some missing function of their spirit rendered them impotent either for action or for compassion with each other.

The Communists were in a very small minority in this convoy, most of us belonging to quite different resistance organisations, but when they found that they would be sup-

ported and in a privileged position, they came out into the open, and immediately began to raise their voice against the less "proletarian" of their companions. Many of the weaker brethren, who had hardly heard of Communism, also vowed their devotion to the cause and claimed vulgar and fictitious antecedents, when they saw the gifts of blankets and bread which were brought by the Germans for the newly-arrived faithful. One, who half a year before had denounced sixteen men, including an Englishman, to the Gestapo, claimed to have been Secretary of the Communist Youth of France or some such thing, and was thereafter treated with honour and respect for the rest of his time there. But at the end, when the Americans were on their way to us, he forgot the saviour creed and came crawling to me for favour and special treatment.

The French, as I said earlier, were feared by the Germans from the beginning, that they might prove dangerous by their greater political maturity. There was, in fact, nothing to fear, but measures were none the less taken to send the majority of French arrivals on transport either to Dora or to one of the other camps. When lists arrived the destination was hidden in a code name, and rumours were spread and encouraged that such-and-such a name indicated a camp which was better than Buchenwald. Needless to say that the rumours were intentionally false, but they ensured that the departures went more smoothly. The French Communists, of course, were absolved from transport, and jobs were found for them within the camp. One even volunteered to work in the crematorium, saying that such work was also in the interest of his comrades. (Putting the fat in the fire?)

It was merely a continuation of French disorder that this one party, whose members have within common knowledge practised in France itself the most cold-blooded liquidation of members of other resistance groups, took upon itself here the right to dispose of the lives of all non-adherent compatriots. Chief of them was a municipal councillor of one of the less reputed quarters of Paris (though not one of the

worst), a small fat man with uncertain eyes and a voice viscous with hypocrisy and insincerity. I only had dealings with him on one occasion, when after he had passed a *mot d'ordre* condemning the crossing of the Rhine as treason by German industrial leaders who had sold their country to Anglo-American capitalists, he heard my comments on his probable future and invited me with another officer to hear his formal denial of the words used and to discuss collaboration. I'm afraid that if he expected my thanks he was disappointed.

They did show traces of political acumen, for while this councillor and a handful of associates, few of whose names were French, wielded the real power, they did so behind a façade erected in the form of a *Comité des Intérêts Français*. This organisation was headed by a weakling colonel, who through inadequacy, had been responsible for a big breakdown in the resistance movement in France, and it was composed for the rest of "representative" Frenchmen of all kinds. It could in fact accomplish nothing, nor did it even serve, save as the camouflage and instrument of the Communist Committee. Of the latter's doings the case of Michelin already cited in Chapter III will serve as sufficient example and criterion. By far the greatest number of Frenchmen loathed them and writhed under their grip, but although one or two outstanding men like Thomas, the Socialist deputy, or Professor Balachowski, the entomologist of the Institut Pasteur, made noble efforts to improve the general lot, there was so much squabbling and hot air that the majority were as impotent as a flock of sheep. Those who should have taken the command, and who had in fact the opportunity to help—the many senior and junior officers of the Army and Air Force—shrunk from responsibility, cowered before the threat of transport and showed only their true craven personality in an unshaven chin and such phrases as "*Ce n'est pas le moment. Il vaut mieux rentrer sain et sauf chez soi.*" Safe and sound, yes, but deprived of their last shreds of honour. Few, if any, of us came through Buchenwald with our pride quite unscathed, but it would

be well for the French Army to look to those officers and wonder if they have the real quality to lead, to take responsibility for men's lives.

There is much more to be said, but to say it would be to exceed the limits of friendship. It is for the French people themselves to search carefully into the causes for which two-thirds of their men who went to Buchenwald died deaths of misery and want. The evil lay only on the surface, but weakness allowed it to levy its toll through their entire ranks. They mutely acknowledged that weakness, and showed it in an empty cacophony of boasts and threats. That is the downward path and ends only in recrimination, disorder and bloodshed, for they are a quick race and too ready to let emotion guide their better judgment. It would be wiser now, as it were, to count ten before they speak. For they still have friends waiting to come to their side. They are in need of much help and could ill afford to spurn it by standing on a dignity which is no more than a façade of bravado. Those of them who really fought this war with us come to us openly. Why should the others feel too proud?

THE JEWS AND OTHERS

THE groups which I have described so far comprise the most interesting of the peoples in Buchenwald from the point of view of their actual political activity and social behaviour, but no history, however superficial, would be complete without mentioning the Jews. They fell into three types: German, Polish (including Baltic) and Hungarian; and while the first were in my time limited to some 500 survivors from the pre-war persecutions and had been able to secure for themselves a certain degree of immunity from immediate danger, the two foreign categories provided by far the most glaring example of Nazi brutality. So I will dismiss the German Jews by saying that, while they were subject to certain minor restrictions, such as being forbidden to smoke, they had been in the camp so long that they "knew the score" and in a

quiet way managed to lead a fairly peaceful life; and I will limit myself to a short account of the manner of handling the others.

In both cases the attitude of the S.S. was that Jews were only fit to die, that economically they should at best die of overwork, but that under no circumstances should economic considerations improve their lot by dictating that, as manpower, they could more profitably be fed on a scale which would keep them at work longer than the time otherwise required for them to die of exhaustion. From the moment they came into S.S. hands they had to work, and no smallest expenditure was made either to make them capable of working harder or to make them last longer. It was constructive and productive extermination.

The Polish Jews had been kept in ghettos ever since the German occupation in 1939, or had been directed to special working camps in which they contributed to the German war effort. During the years before 1944, when a Jew was condemned to a concentration camp, he was normally sent to Auschwitz, where in due course he passed to the gas-chamber. (In one week 63,000 Jews from Salonika were killed in this way, and in the whole time perhaps 3,000,000.) But during the Russian advance into Poland in the winter of 1944, it was clear that Auschwitz would be overrun, so that not only was that camp evacuated, largely to Buchenwald, but also the thousands of other Jews from the camp at Stutthof and Grossrosen, as well as the ghettos and ghetto-factories, were sent to Buchenwald, Bergen Belsen, Salzwungen or Dachau.

The winter was of great severity over the whole of Poland and Central Germany. At the time of the mass evacuation a train of 800 German civilians pulled in to the station at Berlin, and every single man, woman and child, with the exception of the locomotive crew, was frozen to death. This caused a certain amount of unrest in Berlin. In Buchenwald there arrived convoys of from 2,000 to 5,000 Jews, but the camp was too hardened to show much feeling. In most cases the evacuees had marched for a

week through the snows before reaching the railhead, and they arrived with horribly frost-bitten hands and feet. When a train pulled in to the camp station, the radio would call first for the Lagerschutz, to escort those who could walk, then for the Fire Brigade to clear the dead from the wagons, and then for working parties to bring the rest down to the Disinfection in barrows and carts. In one convoy of 4,000 800 had died in the train, 375 died actually on their way through the Disinfection, and a further 500 were dead by the following evening. During another, of 2,000, all but perhaps 100 or 150 were frost-bitten, many of them with gangrened feet.

To work in the Disinfection during this period was almost unbearable. It was continuous, since convoys arrived the whole time, and we could never pass more than 150—200 through in an hour. One time we never stopped for three days and nights, working all the time in an atmosphere of gas-gangrene, rotting wounds and dysentery. The four rooms of the building were littered with dead and dying, still forms, writhing forms and others which one thought dead, but which, if one watched closely, gave an occasional choking heave as they gasped their last breaths of air. Perhaps it was one of the worst things for the onlooker that they took such a time dying. But it was always so. The man who has been dying for days passes slowly at the end. Sometimes one whose heart-beat was only perceptible through a stethoscope would linger for a whole night. The dead were piled in fiftens, and the dying laid out, sometimes on blankets, sometimes not, but nothing was ever done to help them. They would die later anyway, was the argument, so it was useless to clutter up the blocks with them or to waste precious medicine in an effort to save them. But even if there was no way of saving them, the callousness, even cruelty, with which they were treated by the prisoners working there was hard to forgive. To understand it was easier, for I worked there myself, and I know too well how a surfeit of such misery boils down one's compassion to a poor shrivelled attempt not to be brutal. There is a limit after which one's

senses refuse to acknowledge too harsh a reality, but men who spoke so much of "comradeship" should have controlled their nervous disgust.

Towards the end of these convoys, when some hundreds of the half-dead were all that was left, they lying naked on the floor, Wilhelm, the chief S.S. Warrant-Officer from the hospital, would come to us. He would look around at the wreckage and then order us to leave, keeping with him only the trusted medical orderly and perhaps one or two other prisoner "doctors". By morning all those we left were killed with an injection of phenol.

It is impossible for any civilised person who has not himself seen it to imagine that such a lack of charity towards suffering could exist. But for those Jews there was never one kind word. One thing must be admitted: that they behaved badly themselves. They were annoying in the extreme by their obsequiousness, even to the S.S., and even among themselves they behaved more like animals than men, fighting and even robbing the dead and dying of their clothing. Sensible men would have realised that treatment such as they had endured must inevitably have affected their better natures, and would at least have tried to bring them back to humanity by behaving humanly themselves. But anti-Semitism is, consciously or unconsciously, endemic in all Central and Eastern Europe, and here it found an outlet. But there was a Pole who worked with me and who himself despised and hated the Jews and said so openly to me, and I never in all my time saw him offer violence, whether verbal or physical, to one of them. Not so the others. Sepp, the orderly, some of the barbers, and even Sasi, were lavish with their expressions of contempt. I suppose it was only another manifestation of their deeply-felt inferiority.

The Hungarian Jews were in essence treated the same, but somehow they seemed to come out of it worse. They claim not to be of Hebrew race, but to descend from the Chazars, a people who had a kingdom in what is now South Russia in the 7th, 8th and 9th centuries A.D., and whose kings and aristocracy adopted the Jewish faith. How true this is I

cannot confirm, being no ethnologist, but certainly by comparison with the Jews from Latvia and Lithuania they were a sadly degenerate lot. "Petits, laids, et mal foutus" was the apt description given them by a French professor, and indeed they were. Their physical resistance was lower than that of any other group, and morally, too, they seemed to have yielded further to the Nazi process of de-humanisation than the others.

As soon as possible after their arrival, Jews were sent out to work. Their main camps were in petrol factories at Zeitz, Merseberg and Leuna, though some were also sent to mixed Kommandos in other factories. In the petrol factories they lasted an average of perhaps three months. Many died there, but the rest were returned to us as being of no further use to the Reich, and at Buchenwald they were re-sorted and sent on, generally, to Auschwitz or the famous "Rest Camp" at Bergen Belsen, where they were put to rest for ever. These returning transports were sometimes even worse than the new convoys. Starvation more severe than previously, harder driving and industrial wounds combined to make their general aspect indescribable, even by the most gifted pen. I shall not even undertake to try.

Only a few thousand Jews are left in Europe today, out of about eight million in 1933, but they represent an enormous human problem. They are openly disliked in the countries which have harboured them during the past centuries, and do not themselves wish to return there. On the other hand, they are all, or almost all, in such a state of physical and mental depravity that it will be many years before they will be able to take part in normal life. Hitler and Himmler did their work thoroughly, and ensured that those who escaped with life should be left crippled for living.

Of the other non-Jews in Buchenwald there is little to be said within the scope of this work. The Poles were the only large group which I have omitted, but they were a clear and concise unit without complications. They had a few so-called Communists, but otherwise their political attitude was one of pride and independence. They disliked Germans and

Russians with almost equal fervour, derided the French, were distant with the Czechs, but looked towards England and America with longing for a new star of liberty to rise. The first of them to arrive in Buchenwald from Auschwitz plotted the overthrow of the German Communists, but the conspiracy was laid bare too early, and the stern vengeance of our jungle imposed death on many of their members. (Karl Hoven was responsible for a good share of the liquidation.) After this one abortive attempt, they contented themselves with holding their own, which was not difficult, as they were both numerous and of one mind, and eked out their lives not too precariously in positions of minor importance or obscurity.

Centuries of oppression have made the Poles sensitive and quick to find enemies, and in the camp this showed itself in a tendency to arrogance. They were tough, too, and answered their masters in their own language of defiant insult and contempt. For this reason many found them savage, but few troubled to make their close acquaintance, and indeed they themselves did not encourage friendship, so that even fewer were welcomed into their tight free-masonry of patriotism. They may be difficult in many ways, but they are not bad.

Then there were 400 Norwegian students, herded to Buchenwald for sabotage of German Kultur. Though harshly treated in the beginning, Swedish intervention earned them special treatment, and they lived richly in splendid, if forced, isolation. In spite of this no group was better liked than they.

They were followed much later by 2,000 Danish policemen, also kept apart and well-supplied by the Danish Red Cross. They were disliked by the Germans, because they firmly refused to be brow-beaten, and, being policemen, their firmness conquered.

There was a small group of Spaniards, refugees from the civil war, who were models of what prisoners should be. They played no politics here, though in their own country they had fought for their idea. They were always polite, helped each other, and although they had not seen their

country for many years, never allowed a sign of flagging courage to escape them. I would write more of them, so that the volume of my words should mark the sincerity of my respect, but they lived simply and within themselves, so I will only say that he who thinks ill of Spaniards should think again. Whatever their faults, they behave like men of dignity.

The Dutch never seemed to form a group as the others did, but of all nations they gave the camp its finest personalities. Peter Kool, Jan Robert, Baumann were respected and liked as probably no other prisoners in the whole camp. But they had character, of which there was no glut, and they never did anything but help. Even in that moral wilderness real worth counted for something.

The lonely Serbs, the Croats who hated them and lived in an atmosphere of secret societies, the worthy Luxemburgers, and the isolated etceteras, all played their parts in the tragedy. But they were minor roles. Some played them ill, some well, but they were not prominent enough to attract the critic's eye. So we will leave them and go forward to the closing of the play, in which all had equal interest, for they were never nearer death.

PART. III

CURTAIN

BEFORE beginning the story of the crescendo and climax of the first eleven days of April, I must introduce the characters who played the chief parts. There were three active elements: the German Communists, the sensible Independents, and the S.S. Of the first it is difficult to say which one of them finally played the most important role. The most useful to the camp was undoubtedly Hans Dietrich, who did everything in his power to prevent his comrades from taking rash decisions which would have precipitated us all into a hectic hour of butchery, but against him weighed the fools such as Neumann, chief clerk of the camp, who nearly lost all by one single action. In fact, in those difficult days it was pleasing to record that there was willingness to co-operate, even if unwillingness to submit to more qualified judgment.

The Independents were, as their name implies, simple prisoners who only played politics, if at all, in so far as it was necessary for their safety. First, head and shoulders above all, stood Emil Kalman, a Viennese journalist. As is now widely known, Emil had, in August, 1944, saved two British and one French officer from certain execution. It was at this time that I came to know him, though our relations were for security reasons restrained, and to appreciate his unbelievable clarity and coolness of mind and his ability to take risks which would have daunted most ordinary heroes. But the story of this escape has already been written by those who were saved and I will leave it and write of Emil as the principal saviour of the 23,000 prisoners who were there to greet the tanks of the American Third Army.

Emil had been in Buchenwald since the early days of the war. He was, in Austrian politics, known to be a Rightist and a Catholic, and for this reason came in for much persecution at the hands of the Communists. He escaped two

of their traps, but one day, finding himself scheduled to leave for Auschwitz for liquidation, took a bold step and persuaded the S.S. major in charge of the Hygiene Institute to employ him as secretary. What method of persuasion he used I never asked, but in effect from that moment Emil was virtually in safety from his fellow prisoners, since no personnel of the Institute could be transferred from it except on the personal order of Sturmbannführer Ding (later von Schuler). Working for Ding, he studied him, learned his connections with Himmler, of whom he was a special protégé, read his correspondence and established himself in his confidence. Often Ding would take him down to Weimar, where he met the major's family and even became known to the children as "Onkel Emil", and in a short time he had so far mastered his subject that he was in effect master of the Institute, Ding and all. When he was approached in the matter of the three officers, he never hesitated, but agreed to save them, and proved his mastery by virtually forcing Ding into committing himself. It was the first important use he had made of his power and it was such a complete success that, when one of the three was called for by the executioners before he had had time to die, Ding made a personal assurance to the Commandant that he had executed him himself and a certificate to that effect was sent to Gestapo Headquarters.

After this coup Emil stayed quiet, though with his henchman, Heinrich Bilder, he sent a considerable amount of information out to the Allies.

Working with him in the Institute was Jan Robert, a Dutchman who had been famous as an Olympic runner and as an expert on education and child-psychology. It is useless to try to praise such a man as he. None who knew him need to be told of his quality, and those who did not know him in the hardest years of his life can never entirely appreciate it. His countryman Peter Kool, of whom I have already written, was also of the band, and Wilhelm Hegel, former treasurer of a great Saxon city, and Ferdinand (whose other name escapes me) a Communist poet, acted as liaison officers

between us and the Communist Party. Finally, there was Fritz Edelmann, the chief barber to the S.S. He had been a motor dealer in Dusseldorf, but had adopted the easier profession in the camp, and for years had shaved the chins of the S.S. officers. He had a great personality and had slowly gained the confidence of the officers, especially Pister.

Of the Commandant himself I need say no more, so I will start the recital of the facts as they occurred.

March 25th. Emil called me and informed me that Ding had just returned from Ohrdruf, where one Kommando S.3 (13,000 men) was employed digging tunnels for the accommodation of the train of Hitler's Headquarters and various other important Nazi Government offices. While he was there communications between Ohrdruf and the Führer's train, some twenty kilometres to the south, had been interrupted. A conference was held of all senior officers at Ohrdruf to decide what to do with the prisoners in case the Americans showed up in force in the neighbourhood. Suggestions were made, first to gas them in the tunnel, secondly to blow them up. Both were squashed on technical grounds. Finally, Himmler was telegraphically asked for instructions. He replied with a suggestion, but no rigid order, that criminals and the more prominent political prisoners should be executed and the rest put to march eastwards, to Buchenwald or beyond. Finally, it was reported that American advanced points which had reached the area had withdrawn.

It was decided to perfect plans we had already started for a provisional administration which would assist the American authorities to evacuate the camp and to care for the sick. At the same time we discussed possible measures to combat any effort to evacuate or liquidate Buchenwald, but no decision was reached.

March 26th. The Commandant called on all German prisoners to assemble in the cinema, where in a long speech he said in effect: "I will not evacuate the camp of my own accord. If I get orders to do so I must obey, but I will oppose evacuation in so far as it is possible, and wish to hand

it over in good order. To this end I look to you, the Germans, to maintain discipline and to ensure that no thoughtless behaviour provokes me to change my mind."

The camp was full of optimism after this, and the Germans added to their swagger and self-importance. But we did not entirely trust the Commander's word. It might well have been his intention to lull us into a false sense of security and prevent any measures being taken to bring about a general rising. He also made an allusion to a radio transmitter which, he alleged, operated from near the camp and had been making requests to the Allies for arms and ammunition to be parachuted into the camp.

There was already a plot among certain French Communists and officers to start a rising. They wished to redeem their face at the last minute, but representations were made to the German Communists, who saw the folly and danger of any such action, and placed their firm veto on the idea. The danger was in fact never very great, but even as hot air such ideas had considerable panic-value, which we needed to suppress as far as possible.

The American Third Army was at this time pushing forward from Fulda and the Rothaargebirge towards Eisenach and Kassel, and we estimated that the first day or two of April should bring them to us. We were wrong, as it turned out, for they were to be forced to a standstill at Eisenach and Gotha and in the Thuringer Wald, but we based our calculations and hopes on this estimate, which at the time seemed reasonable.

March 29th. An English officer, Maurice Pertschuk, was hanged. The reason was insufficiently clear for any action to be taken. This darkened the picture, for he was my best friend. It also made the future look grim for the rest of us.

March 30th—April 2nd. The Easter holiday was, in typical German fashion, observed. Good Friday and Easter Monday were allowed as free days, and Sunday as a half-day. In fact, little work was done at this time, because most of the day was spent under alarm. During the week-end news of American points near Erfurt caused the order to be given

that no prisoners would leave the gates again, and the highest alarm state was given to the S.S.

Meanwhile, the execution of Pertschuk occupied us with plans for disposing of the remaining four British officers who were in danger. Arrangements were made for three, but at the last minute Emil reported that the scheme for one had leaked out and we had to abandon the whole idea, though keeping an open mind about what we would do if desperate measures were called for.

April 2nd—3rd. On Monday evening the picture was suddenly reversed. An order came from the Commandant ordering all Jews to parade in the Appelplatz. There were at the time about 6,000 Jews in the camp. The Block Chiefs and Lagerschutz found it impossible to execute the order, which was allowed to lapse overnight owing to the impossibility of doing anything in the dark. Conferences were held by the camp leaders, at which it was decided that, since departure meant almost certain death, no prisoner could enforce such an order. All abided by the decision, and when the Commandant renewed his order in the morning no effort was made to enforce it. At the same time there was much talk of open rebellion. A number of rifles, bazookas and grenades had been smuggled into the camp, but the number was quite insufficient to deal with any S.S. resistance, especially since the latter had been considerably reinforced and numbered some 3,000 fully-armed soldiers. Finally, however, it was decided not to fight over the Jews, nor to expedite their departure, but to fight if one further class was called for transport.

During the preceding week Emil, Jan Robert and I had devised a plan to forestall any premature arming of prisoners. We had three pistols available and a number of hand-grenades, and knowing the location of the main arms-dump, it would not have been difficult for us to hold it and use it to arm reliable men if order had to be kept. We were perhaps prejudiced by the attitude of some of the Communists, but it seemed likely that a few prisoners might be

of the Americans, and we felt that the risk was too great for us not to be ready for it. As events proved, we never needed to put the plan into operation, but we were nevertheless ready at a few minutes' notice from March 29th onward. It was perhaps lucky for us.

On the Tuesday evening one of the British officers received a report, emanating from a fairly reliable S.S. source, that during the night the S.S. were to come into the camp and remove us four. I immediately informed Emil, who in the space of one hour arranged through devious channels for us to spend the night in a secret cellar under a block in the Little Camp.

There was never a night like that. We waited in the annex-crematorium of the Hygiene Institute until a guide came. He led us through a side-gate into the Little Camp and into a block. The Block Chief greeted us, and could not have been more helpful. I think he would have been anyway, but felt happier that on the previous day it had been agreed to drop political squabbles until danger was past. This cleared his conscience, poor man, and once that was done he went about the task of being a Good Samaritan with great gusto. Unfortunately for his enjoinders of secrecy, it turned out that his Stubendienst, who were to help cover us, were Russians with whom I was on good terms, but they entered into the secret spirit and only recognised me by winks. That room was just like a robbers' cave and the night I spent there will always remain one of the most comic-opera nights of my life.

April 4th. A general appel was called for nine o'clock. There was a good deal of alarm, as by now it was feared that the Commandant was going back on his word not to evacuate. The four of us left our hiding-place, which we could do with reasonable safety, but in case of accidents arranged to return. As soon as the blocks were paraded on the Appelplatz, the order was given for the remaining Jews to march to the factory area. There was a block of Jews next to ours, and the Lagerschutz tried to get them to move off. They met with no success, so the Rapportführer ordered

S.S. N.C.O.s to come down and take the block over. Gradually they shuffled off in the right direction, but as they came level with one of the streets leading off the Platz, they broke their ranks and ran towards the Little Camp. The S.S. drew their pistols and fired, bringing down two (they were appalling shots), while others ran to head them off. Eventually, kicked and beaten, the majority were herded over to the factory. Some succeeded in slipping unnoticed into the ranks of Aryan blocks. Some hid, but the first thing I saw on coming off the Platz was the body of one who had been found hiding by two S.S. and had been shot through the neck.

Still there were large numbers of Jews left in the camp, but it was felt that perhaps the S.S. would keep quiet for a while with what they had.

What must be realised at this point is that the extraction of the Jews completely dislocated the complicated system of nominal rolls and numbers, so that it was henceforth impossible to identify the absence of a given prisoner from his block. This, of course, helped us enormously, as it meant that we need neither sleep nor parade with our own blocks.

Throughout the day there were rumours of new evacuations for the morrow, of American tanks in Erfurt, Weimar, and everywhere else where they were not. But nothing happened. In the evening we decided that to be on the safe side we four should spend the night in our Little Camp hide-out unless it became necessary for Jews to use it if there was an S.S. search.

At about ten o'clock Emil came down with Jan Robert and two or three others with news that a list of forty-six prisoners had been given to the S.S. by the Gestapo for immediate execution. It was immediately decided on all sides that none of them should appear. The list had been originally given to the Gestapo by an ex-prisoner who had volunteered for the S.S. and who had later gone to the S.D., and it was purely a matter of personal vengeance. It included a number of non-politicals like those from Block 50, and also a number of leading Communists, including Karl of the kantine,

Neumann, the chief clerk, and the Kapo of the hospital, etc.

We left our hide-out and put Emil's men in, and I went to Block 50 to wait for Emil's return so that we could discuss the new situation. It seemed likely, in view of the known origin of the list and the status of those on it, that the Commandant would be loath to execute, and if the forty-six were simply not to appear, he might be able to tell the Gestapo that they had already been evacuated. So we agreed that non-appearance was not likely to have any disastrous consequences for the camp as a whole. Werner Hilpert then came to us and brought disquieting stories of a new transport to leave on the morrow. He suggested writing a personal letter to the Commandant urging him to disregard the list and to keep to his word of the 26th. The latter could be signed by representatives of the western countries, and Werner assured us that the French Deputy Marie and a Belgian ex-minister were willing to do so. Peter Kool then said that he would sign for the Dutch, and for a long time we debated the wisdom of my signing for Britain. My signature, or rather the designation beneath it, would undoubtedly carry more weight than all the others put together, but Werner discouraged me, saying that my position was already too delicate. Finally, however, it was agreed that all four should sign, because the Commandant was unlikely to let the letter go further than himself, and anyway I could stay hidden if necessary. So we composed it and had it signed and gave it to Hans Dietrich to give to Fritz Edelmann who would be able to give it to the Commandant in the morning.

April 5th. This morning brought early the order for the transport of 8,000 for Theresienstadt, of which Wilhelm had told us in the night. In point of fact this transport had been ordered several weeks before, and it would have been perhaps better to accept it, and let it go as a matter of routine. But the camp leaders, I think rightly, decided to sabotage it. They had several conferences with S.S. officers, who insisted that it should leave, and after passing the greater part

of the day in this way, it was finally decided to compose a transport of the worst elements of the camp—those who would be most likely to pillage and cause trouble at the end. Every moment gained was lives saved, because we were flooded with reports of American advances out of the Thuringer Wald and along the plain to the north of us.

This morning, too, came two developments of the story of the forty-six men. First, Hans Neumann, the chief clerk, who was on the list, disappeared with the list. I went up to the office early and found an N.C.O. looking very glum and asking where Neumann was, and as I left he ordered the stripping and searching of the entire building. The disappearance of the list seemed a considerable error of judgment, as it was bound to affect the prestige of the Commandant, both with himself and with the rank and file of the S.S. Nothing would be worse than to force him to a demonstration of his continued mastery. However the damage was done, and all we could hope for was that Pister would be encouraged by our letter to pass beside the point. Obviously, though, further resistance in the matter of the 8,000 men would only aggravate the damage, and it was agreed to let them go rather than have Pister give an order either for the liquidation or total evacuation of the whole camp.

Fritz Edelman brought more cheering news. The letter we had written had in the first place come before the Communist leaders, who made a lot of stupid comments about it being better to fight than to negotiate, but Hans Dietrich and Fritz persuaded them that it was a matter of saving 45,000 lives and they then let it go. Fritz had no difficulty in giving it to Pister, who was in bed at the time. Two S.S. majors were with him, and after he had read it to himself he made Fritz read it aloud for the other two. He seemed highly elated and asked Fritz if he knew the people who had signed it and made him try to decipher the signatures. But these were purposely hard to read and Fritz said a stranger had given the letter to him. We were a little worried that one of the majors was the liaison man to the Gestapo, but Fritz assured us there was nothing to fear, and that all

there had turned from glumness to positive radiance. Admittedly, we had told Pister some pretty nice things.

April 6th. The transport of 8,000 "cretins", as we called them, left. Few tears were shed and the camp relaxed a little and passed the time spreading rumours and discussing what was going to happen.

The gunfire seemed to have come no nearer and fighters only came over irregularly. It was a pity that the General Staff did not understand the S.S. mind. Every time an American fighter appeared all the sentries left their posts and ducked into the woods, and if one fighter had circled the camp more or less continuously there would never have been any question of evacuation or liquidation. However, one can't have everything.

April 7th. Pister received evacuation orders from Berlin and announced that the entire camp was to be evacuated by Monday morning. 10,000 were to leave immediately, and S.S. were sent into the camp to help get them on parade. In Block 49 there was some passive resistance and N.C.O.s went in with sticks and threw the men bodily out of the upper windows.

In the night three French blocks were evacuated by the S.S. Probably Pister had heard (from whom?) of the repeated French talk of rebellion and had used this method of avoiding open trouble as far as possible, but that is not certain.

In the night, too, after a day of talks with all sorts of authorities, persuading them that tactically our few ill-armed men would not hope to overpower the S.S., Emil proposed that a second letter should be written to Pister. To save time I will give as nearly as I can remember the text.

Weimar, April 8th, 1945.

Kommandant,

Transports are leaving Buchenwald. Those transports mean death to thousands of innocent men. Hitherto you have earned for yourself the reputation of being one of the best Commandants of a Concentration Camp. We, the

Allies, know this as well as your prisoners.

Dropped from the air with a special mission, we have witnessed the horror of the evacuation of Ohrdruf. We have seen the thousands of bodies, shot in the neck by incensed youth. The people of Thuringia must pay for that. Let them not pay for Buchenwald too. The decision is yours.

Stop it, Commandant, stop it at once! (Schluss damit—sofortiger schluss!) At this moment the American tank commanders are on the way to present you with your account. You have one more chance!

Signed. James Macleod, Major,
War Office, London.

On the following morning Emil, dressed in Luftwaffe uniform, left the camp in a packing-case of serum, whose transport to Berlin had been specially ordered by Ding. At Weimar he was unpacked, posted the letter, and was to remain in hiding until the arrival of the Americans. Only Emil could have conceived that and dared it. He knew that the only hope was to encourage Pister's inclination to betray Berlin and to think for himself and his family, and in face of the direct order from Headquarters strong measures were needed.

Great care had to be taken choosing the paper, handling it with gloves and writing it. I could not write it as there was almost certainly a record of my handwriting at Weimar, if not in the political section of the camp, and suspicion would point too easily to me. Eventually, in the small hours, it was ready, in the fair hand of Jan Robert.

April 8th. Emil left as quietly as he did everything. We were worried that we could get no confirmation of his safe arrival, but the faith we shared made his leaving easier. He carried as sole passport a piece of linen sewn into his tunic, on which I had written a recommendation to the American who found him. Thank God, eventually all went well.

The evacuation was going on very slowly. There were orders and counter-orders and few left. Those that did were kept overnight in the factory grounds, where they spent the

time killing each other. Robbery was the motive, and 138 corpses were found in the morning. The beast was beginning to reappear among the prisoners. When the order was given for the Little Camp to be emptied, the Studendienst and Block Chiefs, assisted by the Lagerschutz and German auxiliaries, made a horrible display of brutality, beating and kicking and swearing at wretches who were too sick to walk or even stand up.

A few small groups came in from evacuated Ohrdruf, where they told us how 8,000 of them had been shot in the neck by Hitler Jugend. General Patton, when he arrived at this camp, ordered a whole armoured division to drive slowly through it so that they could understand what they were fighting.

April 9th. This morning the Greens and the Russian official P.O.W.s were evacuated. A further 10,000 was scheduled to leave in the afternoon, but the last we heard of them was that they could not get beyond Weimar as the roads were cut.

The bulk of the S.S. left with their transport and nearly all the bread in the camp. Only one day's ration of 250 grammes per man was left. A battery of 88-m.m. guns took up its position below the camp.

April 10th. The battle was very near now. The battery which had come up on the previous evening fired a few rounds and then withdrew. On each of the past few nights there had been terrific air-raids against the Leipzig-Halle-Maddeberg area, and we could watch the whole plain being lit up by what the Germans called "Christmas-trees".

We had nothing to do but wait, listening to rumours and trying not to think of the possibility of liquidation. We had waited so long that the idea of liberation was now no more than a habit.

During the night the gunfire became much heavier and nearer, and there was a big bombardment of Erfurt, which was only eight miles from us by crow's flight.

April 11th. Pister called the Lagerälteste I and Fritz Edelman and said: "I am leaving now. You will be Com-

mandants of this camp and will hand it over to the Americans for me. I pledge you not to repeat this until after the arrival of American troops." What is the verdict on Pister? It is certain that he wished to avoid trouble. Even after the mutiny of the forty-six men he never ordered the S.S. to search the camp, and he always appeared anxious to help the prisoners to sabotage the evacuation. We learned later that on this morning a special squad of S.D. with flame-throwers arrived in Weimar with instructions to liquidate what was left, but was withdrawn owing to the too rapid American advance.

Throughout the morning there was machine-gun and artillery fire quite close, and we saw groups of German artillery and infantry withdrawing along the plain. At about midday the S.S. sentries left their posts and disappeared. Two hours later, when the coast was well clear, daring prisoners hoisted the white flag from the mast on the main tower, and Jan Robert and I, who were watching from a window of Block 50, saw them taking the hidden weapons from the "secret" dump. They were very childish, forming bands of different nationalities and marching about looking as if they had defeated the entire Wehrmacht. The S.S. magazine was raided, too, and there was much trigger-happiness, men shooting each other, shooting themselves and shooting into thin air.

At five the first American tank came to the camp, and I went up to touch it and make sure that it was true. But in that atmosphere it was hard to appreciate what had happened.

There was already a new Communist administration in charge of the camp. The worst of them, the pure, had at last come out into the open. They could not do much harm now, but they were annoying, strutting with self-importance and making endless speeches about comrades over the radio, which we fervently prayed would at last be silent. But they had a bad record to talk down.

They made what seemed to me an unpardonable mistake. There were two of their party, Kárl of the kantine and Hans

Dietrich of the food store, who knew more about catering than anyone in the camp. Catering was the most important job on hand. There was almost no food in the camp and little prospect of the Army being able to send it for a day or two. Meanwhile 23,000 men had to be fed. In spite of this, the new government, which was led by the farthest extremists, excluded Karl and Hans from their executive because they were known to have pro-Ally sympathies. I had to interfere and put the two of them up to the American commander as being the only people fit to do the work. In the morning they went out in a commandeered car and requisitioned, among other things, 5,000 litres of milk. The proof of the pudding. . . .

Perhaps this extraordinary prejudice was explained by the fact that, at a meeting of the German Communist leaders about ten days previously, it had been resolved "that it is in the highest degree regrettable that the Anglo-American capitalists should liberate us. We will do all in our power, even under them, to retain the position which we have always held". The rest of the resolution need not be repeated, for I hope that these men were and always will be merely irresponsible elements.

Disarmament of the thousands who had rifles and other weapons was another problem. I hoped it might be accomplished without hurting any feelings, but when I came to pass on the American order that prisoners bearing arms risked being shot as franc-tireurs, the Communist leader, who was of our enemies, took my presumption to heart, so that I had to add firmness to politeness and told him that he could consider himself subject to the American Army and would be well advised to obey orders. This had its effect, and the men were called in. As there were insufficient troops to protect the camp for the first night, I agreed that guards should be posted, which appeased them a little. In the morning they recovered their balance, and, to do them credit, the three or four thousand armed men were disarmed without incident. Only the Russian prisoners of war kept their rifles by agreement with the American Com-

mander and on my advice, as there was much pillaging and disorder and reliable men were needed to control the camp, of which the Americans had only a platoon.

The senior Russian officer asked at this time for a representation to be made to the American commander.

"We wish that all orders for Russians should come direct to us and not through the camp leaders. We have suffered long enough from these Germans (the Communists) and wish the indignity to end."

It did. They did not like each other, but nobody liked the Germans.

We had reached the end. The Americans were beyond common praise. Although their main forces were still miles behind the spearhead which had overrun us, they brought up food, doctors, nurses and every other kind of help with amazing speed. For us British they were as only allies can be: far nicer than our own people. They gave us everything we wanted, and what we wanted was good, and when I arrived in London a few nights later, was driven to a hotel and there told I could not have a whisky-and-soda, I am afraid I wished I had stayed with them.

I wonder whether my friend, the platoon commander of Rangers, with whom I spent the first night in the bedroom of one of the officers' villas, could sense the emotions which tossed me. I was not drunk with freedom—freedom of movement, freedom from want—for I had in some way trained myself to stay spiritually free, and when that is achieved the other "freedoms" become less noticeable. But I was stunned and blinded by my sudden entry into the daylight of friendliness. This was not comradeship as we had known it in camp, where every link with one's fellows bore a trace of necessity or of advantage one way or the other, which lent it a certain gaucherie. This was just the natural gift of the kindest people in the world for treating others friendlily, as if they were kind too. This was something I really had not seen for years, and I became light-headed and talkative as the protective tension which I had acquired slowly relaxed and let me at ease among men who

were completely at ease with me. It might be easy to wax sentimental over that first night. I shall not do that. But I know that of all the virtues simple friendliness is the greatest, and I am grateful that my re-baptism in the world was pronounced in the language which, though some may sneer, expresses it best of them all.

CONCLUSION

THIS conclusion is apt to occupy more space than the sketch of facts from which it is drawn. The reason is simple. Take each fact or feeling or tendency of each kind of man, and you will find that, going back to origins, they are convergent, but that going forward to results, they are divergent and present whole descendent families of problems. Each of these problems should then be examined in the light of the first origins, and it is then found that yet other factors are brought into play, until every known complexity of human life and thought, every emotion, every science, has offered its tributary to the main stream which is European politics.

Then a conclusion is a very personal thing, and therefore all the more difficult to write if one wishes to remain objective. Had another than myself observed the same phenomena he might, according to his different outlook or "school of thought", drawn a diametrically opposite conclusion from them. Obviously, then, if I was to be quite fair and warn the reader of the different mental currents which have evolved the record of my senses, I would first have to expose my entire philosophical equipment. But that would require a thick volume, and this, with all that has gone before, is intended to be a thin one. Indeed, it may be said in criticism that I have already over-indulged a propensity to "waffle", that I should have contented myself with recording facts and have left the reader to draw his own conclusions. But I would then have neglected the object of this book, as I stated it in the preface, which is to warn people not of what happens to them when they get there, but what

gets them there in the first place, and how near they are at this very moment to a revival of the barbarity of Buchenwald.

My basic conclusion is that the vast majority of the non-Nazis of Europe, and more especially of Germany, are not material which, without careful selection and treatment, will produce a new civilised continent. There were in Buchenwald responsible representatives of almost every anti-Nazi organisation. They were there, cramped in an enclosure, with an ideal opportunity to study and prove their ability to work sincerely for the common good. And they failed. They could have said: "The Nazis have cast us brutally into the midst of horror. We will show the world by our example that our cause is just, that if we are ever freed we will be successors of whom no honest man need be afraid. We will show that we are champions at least of elementary decency and the respect of human life and liberty." They proved the contrary. They proved that in fact they, too, were moved only by greed, ambition or weakness.

Ideology cannot replace morality. As far as Europe is concerned, there are two possible foundations on which political structure can be held. First, exemplified in various regions of western and central Europe and America which have inherited the amalgamated traditions of Greeks and Romans and early Christians, an ethical base, first clarified by the Greek philosophers and then evolved into legislation by Roman jurists, which ultimately refers to a strictly non-material factor which is justice. Justice is a natural law just as much as that of gravity, and its violation produces strains and reactions just as severe as those produced when a body attempts to obstruct the course of another body under the influence of gravity. The idea of justice is, however, so familiar to peoples who have traditionally lived under it, even in an imperfect form, for many centuries that it has a tendency to be overlooked, just in the same way as the appetite for food becomes overlooked by those who live too richly and too well, and, continuing the simile, is not only overlooked but distorted both in value and interpretation.

Nevertheless, it has been proved by the physicists and mathematicians who are now beginning to emerge from the purely sensual materialism which started at the time of Descartes, that the nearest which man, with his essential function of thought, can approach to a constant value will, in view of the uncertainty of the origins of matter, inevitably be a non-material value—or, to put it better, a value imperceptible to the senses.

In England, in spite of the evidence of superficial inequalities and even of isolated injustices, our entire life rests and has rested for the past seven centuries on this foundation of absolute justice. The chain of immaterial discrimination between right and wrong has been continuous throughout our constitutional and legal history, and it is useless to uphold the imperfections with which fools and rogues have fouled the chain in order to condemn our whole system as being wrong. One thing at least is certain: observance of the law of justice has preserved us from falling into a state of inhumanity.

The second political foundation, commonly called ideology and with the generic ending "ism", constitutes not so much a departure from the ethical principles of the west as a series of new political hypotheses, evolved, not from the ordered reasoning of thinkers who had considered all the aspects of the nature of man as well as of his surroundings, but from an attempt to place mankind on a purely material plane from which the solution of all his [purely material] problems could be arithmetically deduced.

It is comparatively easy for the superficial mind to think in such terms, but vanity and ambition, whether of the thinkers themselves or of professional adherents, forbids satisfaction with less than the activation of the picture. Since there is only one false value put into the equation to make it equate, that is to say, the assumption that man must live on a purely material plane, it is necessary to make that value true, and since men are so flimsily constructed that in fact they follow their appetites and emotions, which are material, more easily than their powers of thought and will,

which are non-material, but equally essential to them as human beings, the task was rendered easy. The system is twofold, first to offer satisfaction to man's appetites through promises of more of this, that and the other, and, secondly, the utilisation of man's essential intellectual laziness and his many, and often justifiable, grievances to drive him into a herd where he can sling the weight of his moral responsibility as one man among his fellow-men conveniently off his shoulders and relax into the comfortable licence of a mob.

There has been much talked about the herd instinct, but in fact there is no instinct essential to a man which urges him to join a herd. Man, as Aristotle has said, is a political animal, but he is not a cow. The study of mass psychology has shown that man within a mass loses his capacity for individual thought and will while his submission to his instincts is deepened—e.g., fear spreads more quickly to panic in a crowd than in an individual. A crowd is therefore more easily subjected to the will of one individual than is a single man.

So we have on the one hand a society which 'is ordered by the will to justice of each individual member of it and on the other hand a society whose ordering is placed by the weight of a mass at the disposal of a despot or oligarchy, whose ethical principles have historically been always of the most dubious, but who, apart from that, have obtained their supremacy not by virtue of their ethical principles, if they had any, but by virtue of an appeal and a promise to the purely sensual material appetites of the mass they have formed.

Secondly, we get three kinds of citizen, the one intent on being a member of the first kind of society and fitting himself into it according to his natural gifts without injustice to his fellows, the second the would-be despot intent on converting his society to the second type, and the third the political cow who prefers to forgo his human right to think and act for himself and to prostitute himself to the service of a bull.

Look back again at Buchenwald, see which types had been

chosen by the barbarian Nazis as priority enemies, see what form they gave to that amorphous society which Buchenwald was, and try to deduce what they would make of any other society if given the opportunity.

An electric fence some 2,000 yards in circumference surrounded and isolated a patch of cleared forest. Into that space were crowded some 30,000 men, averagely similar, slaves at least, of the same master, and their only means of passing the time was to live together. They were encumbered by fewer anti-social distractions than generally obtained in the world, for their bread and clothing were bought for them, little as there was, and there were neither women nor alcohol in interesting quantities. They had admittedly harsh enemies to fight; hunger, cold, torture and the hangman's rope; but instead of uniting against them they divided, and instead of studying the way in which they could best help each other they used all their ingenuity to dominate and oppress each other.

There is the fact. It should be sufficiently clear from the preceding chapters. But the reasons can only be found by comparing the fact with the philosophical preamble. I have spoken with a great many returned prisoners from ordinary prisoner-of-war camps and I have never heard that among British prisoners there was any spirit but of comradeship, of each man keeping his own self-respect and helping the other to do likewise. They had quarrels, there were rifts, but never spitefulness, and if more serious animosities were aroused they were quenched by the general atmosphere of goodwill. But in Buchenwald the prisoners were not British but European. Dr. Goebbels tried hard to unite the peoples of Europe against us, the outsiders, by dinning "Europeanism" into their heads until they spat it back at him in revolt. But at least they shared the quality of being divided, and they showed an almost uniform tendency to sling moral weight from their shoulders and seek relief in the animal irresponsibility and licence of a mob. They lacked the strength of character both to suffer physically and to resist morally.

Look more closely at those Europeans. Purposely in the

chapters of the second part of this book I refrained from analysing too deeply or giving too definite a conclusion on their characteristics as shown in their everyday behaviour. But from that sketch it should be discernible that nearly everybody lived by mass emotion, or pure selfishness which was its first descendant, and that only a very few succeeded in retaining their individuality as persons.

In the first place there were the Russians. They had moments of aberration in which they became individuals, but the theme of the Russian symphony was Imperialism sweeping forward behind hordes of obedient soldiery in the manner of the old Mongol conquests, and clad with a new and more accommodating sheep's clothing of mass proletarianism; only the simpler ones among them believed in it: the others recognised the usefulness of a creed, outworn among themselves, as a herald of their paternal feeling towards the lower masses of the lands they wished to conquer. And the simpler ones had never known, in the thousand years of history which lay behind them, the meaning of being an individual free from a mass. They had followed a lead, whether in subjection or revolt, throughout their remembered generations, and even the freest of their kind, the Cossacks, had been mere military serfs to an abstract ruler. They were full of good qualities, but they were not free to make a political reality of them. Indeed, sometimes I thought that they hardly realised the quality of their existence in Buchenwald, because it represented such a slight change from their habitual life. They are a mass, a normally supine mass, but stirred to life and expansion and conquest by the desire for self-expression and by too much need. They will follow a lead to "sublimate" their own interior urge to be free men, even if that lead goes westwards over the Oder. Or will they perhaps direct this enormous energy to developing their own vast resources for their own betterment? That is the course which we must hope their leaders have planned for them. They would be a great people.

Then there were the Czechs, who felt too keenly their age-long subjugation to Germanic influences. They were perhaps

the best balanced of all the peoples in Buchenwald, but they, too, were divided into groups which emulated each other for following and power. And you could read in their remarks about every subject smacking of politics or culture a traditional common fear which affected them not as individuals but as a group. It is easy to understand any Czech or Pole or Frenchman hating the Germans. But there is more in Czech hatred than repugnance against the invasion and occupation of 1939-45. There is an almost superstitious shrinking from anything which savours of the German, but it comes not from Prussian Germany but from Hapsburg Austria. To a certain extent the Czechs have always felt themselves something of a Slav peninsular jutting out into the Germanic sea and threatened by it. Sometimes this feeling is proud, and they cite the history of the Moravian Empire, which stretched from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, or tell at great length the virtue of such-and-such a king who rejected the bribes and offers of peace of Austrian or German princes. But always behind it there is a feeling of fear. Dogs growl at strangers when a stranger has once mishandled them, but they would really like to be patted and to wag their tails again. The trouble is that no one pats the Czechs, and such pats as they have had have brought them little to wag over.

But if they are a Slav peninsular jutting into the German world, they are equally an Occidental peninsular fitting into the Slavonic world. The cultural difference between Czechs and the other Slavonic groups is quite remarkable, although the age of this difference has not yet been able to break the racial and linguistic ties. This difference is most easily discerned as parallel to the difference between the Byzantine and Roman Churches, with their separate histories, aims, influence and development. Just as the Russians are virtually free from any trace of the passage of the Church of Rome and its dissident offspring (implying also Greco-Roman culture), so the Czechs are free of any trace of Orthodoxy. The reason is both historical and geographical and is not worth studying here, but the fact that Orthodoxy never

crossed the Carpathians westward explains the comparative remoteness of the Czechs from Muscovy. Later political developments in both countries accentuated in some ways this Slavonic schism, for the Czechs, an industrious and talented people, found it hard to relinquish their new-found freedom from the Hapsburgs to new serfdom under an unproven totalitarian system, and so tended to look still more to the west for their economic and cultural nourishment, even if strategically they must still have their big step-brother to rely on. Czechoslovakia is one of the master-keys to the future of Europe. It is the only country which, with the necessary economic and financial help, can go straight back to self-government as a democracy. It is the only country where in fact the majority of the population is still able to think for itself, and apart from a few small groups, to play fair politics and to vote for a policy on its merits. That is the important, the priceless gift which we should help them to retain. That is the quality, not its immediate result, which, if saved, will make a bulwark of civilisation on the heart of Europe and a buoy to which the surrounding countries can attach themselves in the storm of their disorder. I am sure that every Czech in his heart wishes to keep it, whatever government he favours, but he looks west for support against the tide of mass thought, mass ideology and mass movement which is driving from the east and is now converging upon him from all sides. We must not forget the slenderness of the thread which holds that wish, nor allow any blundering word or deed to sever it.

What stands around this little knot of drowning civilisation has mostly been already overwhelmed, suffocated and swept away in the flood of temper and emotion which suffering and brutality, brushing aside the warning hand of reason, unleash upon mankind. Of Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary, we know little, but it seems from a name cast out here and there that wisdom and justice and equitable prosperity have had their day and are now mourned in prisons and secret cellars. In Poland the issue is clear. One group, hungry for the wealth and power of a new tyranny, seeks

to dispossess a second group anxious only to see reborn a feudalism which has met its overdue death. The first are apostles of totalitarianism, breathing its hatred and swinging its merciless scythe, the others stand with teeth bared against all comers; and in the middle the luckless peasant child, who only wants that pair of shoes he never had, has no prospect of getting them from either. There is hope for Poland, though most of the road to freedom lies before it; but hope lies only in wise men, not in fanatics.

There is hope for France, too, but great danger, and the greater by virtue of the leadership of civilisation which has been hers in Europe. The trouble with the Frenchmen of to-day is the discouragement and feeling of inferiority which resulted from the tragedy of 1940, and at the same time anger at the men who led France to it. Both reactions could be normal and useful, but both tend to become distorted by lack of the moral strength which can only come from self-discipline and thought. Lack of either paralyses the other, and it was too clear from the behaviour of most French prisoners in Buchenwald that at least self-discipline was becoming a forgotten habit. Cruelty and repression were answered by a moral sagging, pictured in sloppiness, softness and their terrific mortality, and, coupled with anger and resentment, caused endless quarrelling and bickering of the small-boy variety. This miniature France was not a picture of a country but of an assembly of mutually allergic fishwives, but perhaps the very variety of their division showed that they still clung to their character. Only their Communists, who had sunk theirs, at least where theory and not profit was concerned, and who found local support, remained coherent and ruled their fellows, who writhed and cursed under the rod but lacked the wit and will to become men and stand together for their lives and their right. The majority grumbled and threatened but did nothing, talking only of reprisals after the war, and in the meanwhile letting their self-respect veil itself conveniently behind a seven-days' growth of beard.

Remember, however, that a person, even one who leaves

himself in tatters, is worth more than a biped who shaves each morning as a part of his uniform. But here again the ledge is narrow and only a tiny push is needed for the bearded Frenchman to fall over the brink into the easy welter of a "movement" and wake up the next morning as a shaven but soulless commissar or führer. I have been severe in criticising the French, but I have criticised in a spirit of real friendship. I believe that these unshaven Frenchmen are England's natural allies, but we must be wise in our treatment of them until they have recovered from the shock, even as they must be careful not to run until they have passed convalescence.

What of the Germans? I have dismissed the other nationalities so briefly because, in theory at least, they have become once more autonomous and free to dispose of their own future. But a great number of Germans are now under our control, and indeed, if reports are true, have sought to come under it with might and main. The defeat of Nazi Germany has perhaps made the people almost physically aware of the moral illness which has gripped them since they swallowed the National Socialist pill and consciously or unconsciously they have rushed from the East, which was not only an historical bogey but also spelled more totalitarianism, to the West which traditionally, though unwillingly, had been accepted as a home of freedom. They are with us now, perhaps even with a germ of repentance and submission in their spirit, but let it not be thought that they are cured of the illness of mass-Germanism or that they can be put on even convalescent diet.

Let me say straight away that one of the finest men I knew in Buchenwald was a German. He had been an infantry officer in the first world war, a politician after it, but had sickened of the Prussians and had retired to study ethnology. He, alone of them all, was deeply and genuinely saddened in his heart by the downfall of Germany, but knew that the foundations laid by Frederick the Great and Bismarck must be thoroughly destroyed before health could be restored and the Germany he loved, the Lower Saxony of the seventeenth

and eighteenth centuries, refounded on peace and the fat placid prosperity of the burghers of those days. We talked of Chinese philosophy and planned politics for politicians who would hear the small quietness of a mouse more loudly than the megaphones of publicity and the cry of a lost child before the pompous prattling of a president, and we found comfort in the little absurd things.

But of the others scarcely a man was to be found. The Communists were merely Nazis painted red, neither better nor worse, pawning their souls and their fellows' lives for a mock abstract power—for what and over what? Power for good, when they extended the evil of their gaolers? Power over their companions to guide them through to safety? It was neither, but power only as a means of expression for their thwarted, inhibited minds, power to undo all moral or material structure which kept others from joining their herd and rushing with them into anarchy. They were wholeheartedly amoral and had cast off in disgust such shreds of inherited morality as they found still clinging to them. "Bourgeois sentimentality", they called it, but brought from the recesses of their parrot minds unpondered gilded catchwords and the twisted sayings of half-ignorant men to replace it: words of hatred and envy, apologies for murder, theft and enslavement. Some of them, it is true, were better than others, but that was a slur, and their good qualities kept them for ever below the highest places of their caste. Only the pure, the ruthless, those who had lost even the tainting shadow of a soul were fit to rule.

There were the Social Democrats, dissimilar drones whirling round an artificial convolvulus. They had lived too long under tyrannies to understand perfectly either of the words which named their profession, and though they were sincere they were uncertain of what. And seeing their weakness they sought for a centre around which to build a herd, and a pasture on which all could graze with equal appetite. They loved above all things abstract political theory and gave concrete morality a second place. But they gave it a place.

Lastly there were a few individuals. Most of them were harmless; few of them had the character not to crawl to both Communists and Nazis; but they were spiritless and not responsive enough to adopt an uncompromising attitude, though they were men enough not to adopt a slogan. But they did not form one per cent of the total.

The German is not essentially bad. If he was there would be no Milwaukee. But he is made bad by the conditions with which German history has endowed his mind. He is a hereditary subject to despotism; therefore he is a potential despot. The only rule he has known has been that of the secret police, the jack-boot and the bark, and every German not only fears that rule and obeys it, but employs it when it is his turn. Even their grandfathers could not dangle them on their knees and tell brave stories of free days of old, and the idea of tolerance or of reasonable debate are as foreign to him as wearing a kilt. Then, morality was taught (when permitted) in German schools as a purely theoretical subject, and the pupil considered it no more obligatory to practise it than to talk Ancient Greek over a glass of beer, and therefore shed it as easily as any other theory whose practice proved difficult or embarrassing.

It is perhaps being too bold for me to venture here on to the question of our treatment of Germany now that we have defeated it, but I feel it is necessary to urge this fact of German amorality more closely. It is an absence of morality, not a revolt from it. In effect no doubt it is perhaps worse than immorality, but in cause and cure it is different. The ordinary human being who is brought up morally to the age of, say, eight by his mother, and is deprived of the education which would build on that foundation, loses it completely and can never, if left to adolescence in an amoral state, regain it. Occasionally one finds cases of adults being jolted back by abnormal happenings, illness or shock, but in general it does not and can not happen. It will therefore be approximately true that the only living Germans of whom we could form a moral and civilised nation are those up to eight years of age. The conclusions from that fact are

obvious. They are also hard, indicating as they do forty or fifty years of control. But they are true.

I do not believe that any one of the existing political parties in Germany is qualified to undertake the re-education or the rehabilitation of the German nation as a society of civilised people living peaceably together. They do not regard the politician as being a provider of ways and means for his countrymen to live sociably together, but as a superman whose vocation it is to order the dumb masses into the particular path which his enlightened brain has conceived as the best for them. The easiest comparison between the politician of the German school and the politician as he should be is that between the officer who looks after the feeding and well-being of his troops because he knows that only in that way he will get them to fight, and the officer who does the same out of a human feeling, because he likes his troops and feels his responsibility towards them as men rather than towards a system which employs them.

In this difference lies the clue to a great political truth. Where a society is governed by men who are seeking only its well-being the whole political process becomes self-contained or "interiorised". It is itself sufficient reason for its existence and operation. It feeds itself on itself. But where it is governed by men who sit, as it were, on top of it and direct it from above, inspired by vanity or the worship of power or some idea that a nation does not exist so that its individuals can live their own lives to the most happy end but for some "destiny", the very fact of direction implies an exteriorisation. The society is to be collected and ordered; then the very essence of this directorate exacts a goal towards which to push, in order to maintain the momentum given to it by an idea, or even an ideal, and which is necessary to it because it has not the interior strength to live on its own substance. To rule has two interpretations: first, to make adjustments between the components of a society whereby the prosperity of that society will be assured and justice maintained; second, to collect and form a society into an ordered group in order to send it along a predetermined

course (which must take it outside its own normal circle of sociable intercourse or commerce). In other words, rulers must be either judges mediating within an idea of justice or warrior kings marshalling for an ulterior motive.

In a civilised democracy it is from time to time the business of the inhabitants to choose between, in the first place, the relative value to them of justice as opposed to conquest in one form or another, and, if they choose the first, between the different exponents and practitioners of justice. In this case, whoever they elect, they have a chance of living in peace within their own material circumstances. But if they choose a warrior king, they are for it. He may lose his war, in which case they all go down. Those who did not elect him—the partisans of justice or of rival kings—go down anyway because he must have a solid regiment to work with. Hence Buchenwald, etc.

Now, Germans, even those with the right idea of, and will for, justice know no methods other than those of the warrior king. So, whichever of them we chose, we would find new Dachaus and Buchenwalds (in different shape), a Gestapo under a new name and sergeant-majors disguised as judges. They just don't know any better. So if we decide to take the problem on, we must teach them from the beginning and ensure that they practise our teaching until it is as familiar as the old "bark and bite". We must encourage their neighbours to follow suit and occupy themselves first with establishing a political system limited to just interior administration. In this way they will feel at home with one another, relations between them will be on the simplest basis and the tendency at present general in all Europe to keep a bone between the paws and growl over it will settle down and disappear.

Enough of Germany. It were perhaps better that it should be submerged beneath a new sea and be for ever forgotten. But even then we should probably only have a new Naval Question. Enough of Europe. You may judge for yourselves the amorality, the cowed seeking of refuge in a herd, the bitterness and longing for revenge (on anybody),

the leadership of the animal emotions, and arising from all these things the care and wisdom and, above all, the justice which we must show if we are to guide it back to civilisation. And guide it we must or perish in its turmoil.

But what of us? Are we able to provide wisdom or justice? When, returning after three years' absence without news of any kind from home, I see so-called responsible politicians reduced to slinging mud by the vituperous bucket; when I see Labour bannered with a capital "L" instead of honoured as the cleanest means of livelihood and the Trades Unions being inveigled, even unwillingly, by malicious psychologists from their real function of societies for the prevention of injustice to employees into an airy disembodied representation of an ideology; collecting an ordered herd to rush—whither? When I see rich men reject the responsibility of their fortune to look after the interests of their fellows and care for nothing except getting all they want at any price; when I see all this and more I wonder whether the elements of the concentration camp are not here as well. On the one hand there are brains, on the other energy, but on all sides there are greed, ambition, selfishness and a perversion of the conception of right. Only a little kernel seems to have kept its loyalty to just principle as the mainspring of its action.

I lived under the shadow of England for nearly three years and was protected by it against every form of sudden death. That shadow was not material, but an idea, mutely and unwillingly acknowledged even by our enemies, of right, the strongest power in the world; an idea, conceivable only by humans, of which our history has given the best, even though imperfect, illustration. Now we are at a crisis. In the next years the balance will fall. On the one side lies this idea of right, of reasoned self-disciplined behaviour and a search for justice; on the other, evolution to a world of herds, led plunging and fighting for material gain by a few godless megalomaniac bulls. We just, but only just, hold that balance. Millions of Europeans of all races, creeds and even ideologies, are looking to us—yes, even to individuals—and asking, imploring us to set the example which will show

them the way out of the mess, which they cannot analyse but realise none the less. They know our tradition and they will see whether we remain true to it and hold up the banner of right and dignity and firmness; and they will recognise it even before we do if we totter and stammer and then take the fatal plunge into the abyss with them. They may be sorry then for themselves, but on us they will have no mercy; for failing ourselves and our own tradition, we shall have failed them and dishonoured our promise to them. We promised them freedom, and deep in his heart each one of them knows that only England and America remember what freedom is. So we must think soberly and find the right, and if faced with two evils, choose the lesser and determine to improve it. If we follow only our emotions and our appetites and our "herd instinct" it will mean "Back to Buchenwald" for me and a maiden trip for most of you.

